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AN
ANALYSIS OF RELIGIOUS BELIEF

AN ANALYSIS
OF
RELIGIOUS BELIEF

BY
John Ruskin
VISCOUNT AMBERLEY

"Ye shall know the Truth, and the Truth shall make you Free."

VOL. I.

LONDON
TRÜBNER & CO., LUDGATE HILL

1877

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Inscribed,

With all reverence and all affection, to the memory of the ever-lamented wife whose hearty interest in this book was, during many years of preparatory toil, my best support; whose judgment as to its merits or its faults would have been my most trusted guide; whose sympathy my truest encouragement; whose joyous welcome of the completed work I had long looked forward to as my one great reward: whose nature, combining in rare union scientific clearness with spiritual depth, may in some slight degree have left its impress on the page, though far too faintly to convey an adequate conception of one whose religious zeal in the cause of truth was rivalled only by the ardour of her humanity and the abundance of her love.

RAVENS CROFT,

November 1875.

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EXPLANATION OF SHORT TITLES.



IN order to avoid encumbering the pages with notes containing the names of books, many of which would require to be frequently repeated, I have adopted, in referring to the under-mentioned works, the following abbreviations :—

- A. B.....The Aitareya Brahmanam of the Rig-Veda. Edited, translated, and explained by MARTIN HAUG, Ph.D. Vol. i. Sanscrit text. Vol. ii. Translation, with notes. Bombay, 1863.
- A. I. C.....An Account of the Island of Ceylon, by ROBERT PERCIVAL, Esq., of His Majesty's 19th Regiment of Foot. London, 1803.
- A. M.....Antiquities of Mexico (LORD KINGSBOROUGH'S), comprising facsimiles of Ancient Mexican paintings and hieroglyphics. Together with the Monuments of New Spain, by MONS. DUPAIX ; with their respective scales of measurement and accompanying descriptions. The whole illustrated by many valuable inedited manuscripts, by AUGUSTINE AGLIO. In 9 vols. London, 1831-48.
- A. N. L....Ante-Nicene Christian Library; translations of the Writings of the Fathers down to A.D. 325. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1870, &c.
- A. R.....Algie Researches, comprising inquiries respecting the mental characteristics of the North American Indians. First Series. Indian Tales and Legends. In 2 vols. By HENRY ROWE SCHOOLCRAFT. New York, 1839.
- Asha.....Ashantee and the Gold Coast, by JOHN BEECHAM. London, 1841.
- A. S. L....History of Ancient Sanskrit Literature, by MAX MÜLLER. London, 1859.
- As. Re.....Researches of the Asiatic Society in Bengal. Calcutta, 1788-1839.

- Av.....**Avesta, die Heiligen Schriften der Parsen. Aus dem Grundtexte übersetzt, mit steter Rücksicht auf die Tradition. Von Dr FRIED. SPIEGEL. Erster Band. Der Vendidad. Leipzig, 1852. Zweiter Band. Vispered und Yaçna. Leipzig, 1859. Dritter Band. Khorda-Avesta. Leipzig, 1863.
- B. A. U.....**Bibliotheca Indica. Vol. ii. part iii. The Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad, with the Commentary of Sāṅkara A'cha'rya. Translated from the Original Sanskrit by Dr E. ROER. Calcutta, 1856.
- Bergeron...**Voyages faits principalement en Asie, dans les XII^e, XIII^e, XIV^e, et XV^e siècles, par Benjamin de Tudèle, Jean du Plan-Carpin, N. Ascelin, Guil. de Rubruquis, Marc-Paul, Haiton, Jean de Mandeville et Ambroise Contarini ; accompagnés de l'Histoire des Sarrazins et des Tartares, par P. Bergeron. A la Haye, 1735.
- Bernard.....**Recueil des Voyages au Nord. Amsterdam, chez JEAN FRÉDÉRIC BERNARD, 1727.
- Bh. G.....**The Bhagavat-Gītā ; or a Discourse between Krishna and Arjuna on divine matters. A Sanskrit Philosophical Poem ; translated, with copious notes, an Introduction on Sanskrit Philosophy, and other matter, by J. COCKBURN THOMSON. Hertford, 1855.
- Bib.....**APOLLODORI Bibliotheca.
- B. T.....**Buddhism in Tibet, by EMIL SCHLAGINTWEIT, LL.D. Leipzig and London, 1863.
- C. B. S.....**A Catena of Buddhist Scriptures from the Chinese, by SAMUEL BEAL. London, 1871.
- C. U.....**The Chinese Classics, with a translation, critical and exegetical notes, prolegomena, and copious indexes, by JAMES LEGGE, D.D. In 7 vols. Vol. i. Confucian Analects, the Great Learning, and the Doctrine of the Mean. Vol. ii. Works of Mencius. Vol. iii. 2 parts, The Shoo King. Vol. iv. 2 parts, The She King. Vol. v. The Ch'un Ts'ew. London, 1861, &c. (In course of publication.)
- Ceylon.....**Ceylon, an Account of the Island, physical, historical, and topographical, with notices of its natural history, antiquities, and productions, by Sir JAMES EMERSON TENNENT, K.C.S., LL.D., &c. London, 1859.
- C. G.....**A new and accurate Description of the Coast of Guinea, divided into the Gold, the Slave, and the Ivory Coasts. Written originally in Dutch, by WILLIAM BOSMAN. The 2d edition. London, 1721.
- Chan. Up...**Bibliotheca Indica, Nos. 78 and 181. The Chándogya Upanishad of the Sāma Veda, with extracts from the Commentary of Sāṅkara A'cha'rya. Translated from the original Sanskrit by RĀJENDRALĀLA MITRA. Calcutta, 1862.

- Chinese..... *The Chinese: a general Description of China and its Inhabitants*, by JOHN FRANCIS DAVIS, Esq., F.R.S. A new edition. London, 1844.
- Chips..... *Chips from a German Workshop*, by MAX MÜLLER, M.A. 4 vols. London, 1867-75.
- C. N. E.... *Historia General de las Cosas de Nueva España*, que en doce libros y dos volumes escribió el R. P. FR. BERNARDINO DE SAHAGUN, de la Observancia de San Francisco, y uno de los primeros predicadores del Santo Evangelio en aquellas regiones. Dada a luz con notas y suplementos, CARLOS MARIA DE BUSTAMANTE. Mexico, 1829.
- C. O..... *China Opened*, by the Rev. CHARLES GÜTZLAFF, revised by the Rev. ANDREW REID, D.D. In 2 vols. London, 1838.
- C. R..... *Primera Parte de los "Commentarios Reales, que tratan del Origen de los Yncas," Reyes que fueron del Peru, de su idolatria, leyes, y gobierno en paz y en guerra; de sus vidas y conquistas, y de todo lo que fue aquel Imperio y su Republica, antes que los Españoles passan a el.* Escrito por el Ynca GARCILASSO DE LA VEGA, natural del Cozco, y Capitan de su Magestad. Lisboa, 1609.
- Dervishes... *The Dervishes; or Oriental Spiritualism*, by JOHN P. BROWN. London, 1868.
- E. M..... *Eastern Monachism*, by ROBERT SPENCE HARDY. London, 1850.
- E. Y..... *Eleven Years in Ceylon*, by Major FORBES, 78th Highlanders. London, 1840.
- F.G..... *Die fünf Gâthâ's, oder Sammlungen von Liedern und Sprüchen ZARATHUSTRA's, seiner Jünger und Nachfolger.* Herausgegeben, übersetzt und erklärt von Dr MARTIN HAUG. Erste Abtheilung. Die erste Sammlung (Gâthâ ahunavaiti) enthaltend. Leipzig, 1858. Zweite Abtheilung. Die vier übrigen Sammlungen enthaltend. Nebst einer Schlussabhandlung. Leipzig, 1860.
- Gaudama... *The Life, or Legend of Gaudama, the Buddha of the Burmese, with annotations. The ways to Neibban, and notice on the Phongyies, or Burmese Monks*, by the Rt. Rev. P. BIGANDET. Rangoon, 1866.
- G. d. M.... *C. G. A. OLDENDORP'S Geschichte der Mission der evangelischen Brüder auf den Caraibischen Inseln St Thomas, St Croix, und St Jean.* Barby, 1777.
- H. B. I..... *Introduction a l'Histoire du Buddhisme Indien*, par E. BURNOUF. Tome premier. Paris, 1844.
- H. G..... DAVID CRANZ. *Historie von Grönland.* Nürnberg und Leipzig, 1782.
- H. I..... *Historia natural y moral de las Indias, en que se tratan las cosas notables del cielo, y elementos, metales, plantas, y*

- animales dellas ; y los ritos, y ceremonias, leyes, y gobierno, y guerras de los Indios. Compuesta por el Padre JOSEPH DE ACOSTA, Religioso de la Compañia de Jesus. Madrid, 1608.
- H. N. S....*Histoire naturelle et politique du Royaume de Siam*, par NICOLAS GERVAISE. Paris, 1688.
- H. R. C....*An Historical Relation of the Island of Ceylon in the East Indies, together with an account of the detaining in captivity the Author and divers other Englishmen now living there, and of the Author's miraculous escape*, by ROBERT KNOX, a captive there near twenty years. London, 1681.
- Ic. Ch.....*Iconographie Chrétienne. Histoire de Dieu*, par M. DIDRON. Paris, 1843.
- K.....*The Koran, translated from the Arabic, the Suras arranged in chronological order ; with notes and index*, by the Rev. J. M. RODWELL, M.A. London and Edinburgh, 1871.
- Kamtschatka...GEORG WILHELM STELLER's *Beschreibung von dem Lande Kamtschatka, dessen Einwohnern, deren Sitten, Namen, Lebensart und verschiedenen Gewohnheiten*. Frankfurt und Leipzig, 1774.
- K. N.....*The Kafirs of Natal*, by J. SHOOTER. London and Guildford, 1857.
- L. L. M....*Das Leben und die Lehre des Mohammad, nach bisher grösstentheils unbenutzten Quellen*. Bearbeitet von A. SPRENGER. 3 vols. Berlin, 1869.
- Lotus.....*Le Lotus de la Bonne Loi, traduit du Sanscrit, accompagné d'un commentaire, et de vingt-et-un mémoires relatifs au Bouddhisme*, par M. E. BURNOUF. Paris, 1852.
- L. T.....*LAO-TSE Táo-tě-king. Der Weg zur Tugend*. Aus dem Chinesischen übersetzt und erklärt von REINHOLD VON PLÄNCKNER. Leipzig, 1870.
- Manu.....*Institutes of Hindu Law, or the Ordinances of MENU, according to the Gloss of CULLÚCA*. Comprising the Indian system of duties, religious and civil. Verbally translated from the original, with a preface, by Sir WILLIAM JONES. A new edition, collated with the Sanscrit text, by GRAVES CHAMNEY HAUGHTON, M.A., F.R.S., &c. London, 1825.
- M. B.....*Manual of Buddhism*, by R. SPENCE HARDY. London, 1860.
- M. d'O.....*Les Moines d'Occident depuis Saint Benoit jusqu'à Saint Bernard*. Par le Comte de MONTALEMBERT. In 5 vols. Paris et Lyon, 1868.
- Misc. Essays...*Miscellaneous Essays*, by H. T. COLEBROOKE. 2 vols. London, 1837. (The only complete edition, however, is the one published in 3 vols., London, 1873.)
- M. N. W...*The Myths of the New World ; a Treatise on the Symbolism*

- and Mythology of the Red Race of America, by DANIEL G. BRINTON, A.M., M.D. New York, 1868.
- N. A.....An Account of the Native Africans in the neighbourhood of Sierra Leone, by THOMAS WINTERBOTTOM. 2 vols. London, 1803.
- N. F.....Histoire et Description générale de la Nouvelle France, avec le journal historique d'un voyage fait par ordre du Roi dans l'Amérique Septentrionale. Par le P. DE CHARLEVOIX, de la Compagnie de Jésus. 3 vols. Paris, 1744.
- N. M. E....A Narrative of Missionary Enterprises in the South Sea Islands, with remarks upon the natural history of the Islands, origin, languages, traditions, and usages of the inhabitants, by the Rev. JOHN WILLIAMS. London. 1837.
- N. S. W...An Account of the English Colony in New South Wales, from its first settlement in January 1788 to August 1801, by Lieutenant-Colonel COLLINS, of the Royal Marines. London, 1804.
- N. Y.....Nineteen Years in Polynesia : Missionary Life, Travels, and Researches in the Islands of the Pacific, by the Rev. GEORGE TURNER. London, 1861.
- N. Z.....New Zealand and its Aborigines, by WILLIAM BROWN. London, 1845.
- O-kee-pa....O-kee-pa : A Religious Ceremony ; and other customs of the Mandans, by GEORGE CATLIN. London, 1867.
- O. P.....The Speculations on Metaphysics, Polity, and Morality of "the Old Philosopher," LAU-TSZE, translated from the Chinese, with an Introduction, by JOHN CHALMERS, A.M. London, 1868.
- O. S. T.....Original Sanskrit Texts on the origin and history of the people of India, their Religion and Institutions. Collected, translated, and illustrated by J. MUIR, D.C.L., LL.D. Volume First. Mythical and Legendary Accounts of the Origin of Caste, with an inquiry into its existence in the Vedic age. 2d edition. London, 1868. Volume Second. Inquiry whether the Hindus are of Trans-Himalayan Origin, and akin to the Western branches of the Indo-European Race. 2d edition. London, 1871. Volume Third. The Vedas : opinions of their authors and of later Indian writers on their origin, inspiration, and authority. 2d edition. London, 1868. Volume Fourth. Comparison of the Vedic with the later representations of the principal Indian deities. 2d edition. London, 1873. Volume Fifth. Contributions to a Cosmogony, Mythology, Religious Ideas, Life and Manners of the Indians in the Vedic age. London, 1870.
- P. A.....An Examination of the Pali Buddhistical Annals, by the Honourable GEORGE TURNOUR, of the Ceylon Civil Ser-

vice. [From the Journal of the Asiatic Society for July 1837.]

- P. A. B....**Die Propheten des Alten Bundes, erklärt von HEINRICH EWALD. Zweite Ausgabe in drei Bänden. Erster Band. Jesaja mit den übrigen älteren Propheten. Göttingen, 1867. Zweiter Band. Jeremja und Hezequiel mit ihren Zeitgenossen. Göttingen, 1868. Dritter Band. Die jüngsten Propheten des Alten Bundes mit den Büchern Barukh und Daniel. Göttingen, 1868.
- Parsees.....**Essays on the Sacred Language, Writings, and Religion of the Parsees, by MARTIN HAUG, Ph.D. Bombay, 1862.
- Picard.....**The Ceremonies and Religious Customs of the various Nations of the known World, by Mr BERNARD PICARD. Faithfully translated into English by a gentleman. London, 1733.
- Popol Vuh...Popol Vuh.—**Le Livre Sacré et les Mythes de l'Antiquité Américaine, avec les livres héroïques et historiques des Quichés. Texte Quiché et traduction Française en regard, &c., &c. Composé sur des documents originaux et inédits, par l'Abbé BRASSEUR DE BOURBOURG. Paris, 1861.
- R. B.....**Die Religion des Buddha und ihre Entstehung, von KARL FRIEDRICH KÖPPEN. Erster Band. Die Religion des Buddha und ihre Entstehung. Berlin, 1857. Zweiter Band. Die Lamaische Hierarchie und Kirche. Berlin, 1859.
- Rel. of Jews...**The Book of the Religion, Ceremonies, and Prayers of the Jews, as practised in their Synagogues and Families on all Occasions; on their Sabbath and other Holidays throughout the year. Translated immediately from the Hebrew, by GAMALIEL BEN PEDAZUR, Gent. London, 1738.
- R. I.....**Die Religiösen, Politischen, und Socialen Ideen der Asiatischen Culturvölker und der Aegypter, in ihrer historischen Entwicklung, dargestellt von CARL TWESTEN. Herausgegeben von Prof. Dr M. LAZARUS. 2 vols. Berlin, 1872.
- Roer.....**Bibliotheca Indica, Nos. 1 to 4. The first two Lectures of the Rig-Veda-Sanhita. Edited by Dr E. ROER. Calcutta, 1848.
- R. S. A.....**The Religious System of the Amazulu, by the Rev. Canon CALLAWAY, M.D. Part i. Unkulunkulu; or the Tradition of Creation as existing among the Amazulu and other tribes of South Africa, in their own words, with a translation into English, and notes. Part ii. Amatongo, or Ancestor-Worship. Part iii. Izinyanga Zokubula, or Divination. Natal, &c., 1868-70.
- R. T. R. P...**Rgya Tchér Rol Pa, ou Développement des Jeux, contenant l'histoire du Bouddha Cakya-Mouni, traduit sur la version

- Tibétaine du Bkah Hgyour, et revu sur l'original Sanscrit (Lalitavistara) par PH. ED. FOUCAUX. Première Partie. Texte Tibétain. Paris, 1847. Deuxième Partie. Traduction Française. Paris, 1848.
- R. V. S.....Rig-Veda-Sanhita. The Sacred Hymns of the Brahmans, translated and explained by F. MAX MÜLLER, M.A., LL.D. Vol. i. Hymns to the Maruts or the Storm-Gods. London, 1869.
- S. A.....Savage Africa ; the Narrative of a Tour in Equatorial, South-Western, and North-Western Africa, by W. WINWOOD READE. London, 1863.
- Sale.....The Koran, commonly called the Alcoran of MOHAMMED ; translated into English immediately from the original Arabic. With explanatory notes, taken from the most approved Commentators. To which is prefixed a preliminary discourse, by GEORGE SALE, Gent. A new edition, with a memoir of the translator, and with various readings and illustrative notes from Savary's version of the Koran. London, 1867.
- S. L.....A Voyage to the River Sierra Leone, on the Coast of Africa, by JOHN MATTHEWS, Lieutenant in the Royal Navy ; during his residence in that country in the years 1785, 1786, and 1787. London, 1791.
- S. L. A.....Savage Life and Scenes in Australia and New Zealand, by GEORGE FRENCH ANGAS. London, 1847.
- Ssabismus...Die Ssabier und der Ssabismus, von Dr D. CHWOLSOHN. Band I. Die Entwicklung der Begriffe Ssabier und Ssabismus und die Geschichte der harrânischen Ssabier, oder der Syro-hellenistischen Heiden im nördlichen Mesopotamien und in Bagdâd, zur Zeit des Chalifats. Band II. Orientalische Quellen zur Geschichte der Ssabier und des Ssabismus. St Petersburg, 1856.
- S. V.....Die Hymnen des Sâmâ-Veda, herausgegeben, übersetzt und mit Glossar versehen, von THEODOR BENFEY. Leipzig, 1848.
- T. R. A. S...Transactions of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland. London, 1827-35.
- T. T. K.....Laò-tsè's Taò Tě Kīng. Aus dem Chinesischen ins Deutsche übersetzt, eingeleitet und commentirt, von VICTOR VON STRAUSS. Leipzig, 1870.
- V. G.....Voyage du Chevalier DES MARCHAIS en Guinée, Isles voisines, et à Cayenne, fait en 1725.
- Viti.....Viti : An Account of a Government Mission to the Vitian or Fijian Islands in the years 1860-61, by BERTHOLD SEEMANN, Ph.D., F.L.S., F.R.G.S. Cambridge, 1862.
- Wassiljew...Der Buddhismus, seine Dogmen, Geschichte und Litteratur, von W. WASSILJEW. Erster Theil. Allgemeine Ueber-

- sicht. Aus dem Russischen übersetzt. St Petersburg, 1860.
- W. E.....The World Encompassed, by Sir FRANCIS DRAKE, 1577-80. Written by FRANCIS FLETCHER ; collated with an unpublished MS. Edited with Appendices and Introduction by W. S. W. VAUX. 8vo, map. London, Hakluyt Society, 1855.
- Wheel.....The Wheel of the Law. Buddhism illustrated from Siamese sources by the Modern Buddhist, a Life of Buddha, and an account of the Phrabat, by HENRY ALABASTER, Esq. London, 1871.
- Wilson.....Rig-Veda-Sanhita. Translated from the original Sanskrit, by H. H. WILSON, M.A., F.R.S. Vol. i. The first Ashtaka, or Book, of the Rig-Veda. 2d edition. London, 1866. Vol. ii. The second Ashtaka. London, 1854. Vol. iii. The third and fourth Ashtakas. London, 1857. Vol. iv. The fifth Ashtaka. Edited by E. B. COWELL, M.A. London, 1866.
- W. u. T.....Der Weise und der Thor. Aus dem Tibetischen übersetzt und mit dem Originaltexte herausgegeben von I. J. SCHMIDT. St Petersburg, 1843.
- W. W.....Works by the late HORACE HAYMAN WILSON, 12 vols. London, 1862-71.
- Y.....Commentaire sur le Yaçna, l'un des Livres Religieux des Parses ; ouvrage contenant le texte Zend expliqué pour la première fois ; les variantes des quatre manuscrits de la Bibliothèque Royale ; et la version Sanscrite inédite de Nériosengh, par EUGÈNE BURNOUF. Tome i. Paris, 1833. Tome ii. Paris, 1835.
- Z. A.....Zend Avesta, Ouvrage de Zoroastre, traduit en François sur l'original Zend, avec des remarques ; et accompagné de plusieurs traités propres à éclaircir les matières qui en sont l'objet, par M. ANQUETIL DU PERRON. 3 vols. Paris, 1771.

PUBLISHERS' NOTICE.

The reader should bear in mind that, beyond page 336 of the first volume, this work has not had the benefit of the author's final corrections, either as to thought or style.

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57 AND 59, LUDGATE HILL,
June, 1876.

... moving ... of ... passion, separating others, even when every motive of interest and natural affection conspired to unite them, so completely as to impel them to deliver each other up to the ghastliest tortures; Religion deserves a foremost place—if not the foremost place of all—among the emotions which

have in their several ways affected, modified, and controlled the current of human events.

Forming, as it does, so large an element in the constitution of our complex nature, and playing so vast a part in guiding our actions, Religion must well deserve to be made the subject of philosophical inquiry. If we can by any scientific means discover its origin; lay bare its true character to the gaze of students, and estimate the value of its pretensions to be in possession of truths of equal, if not superior, authority to those of either natural or moral science, we shall have performed a task which may not be wholly useless or altogether un instructive.

Our first business, in such an inquiry as this, should be to determine the method on which it ought to be conducted. In analysing the religious systems of the world, the question of method is all-important. Indeed, it will be abundantly evident in the course of the ensuing investigations that the conclusions reached by those who have cultivated this field of knowledge have often been unsound, simply because they have failed to pursue the only proper method. Nothing can be easier, for instance, than to construct elaborate systems of religious philosophy, the several parts of which hang so well together that we find it difficult to urge any solid objection against them, while yet the whole edifice rests upon so insecure a foundation that at the least touch of its lowest stones it will fall in ruins to the ground. This too common mistake arises from the fact that the first principles of the system are assumed without adequate warrant, and will not bear examination. Half, if not many more than half, the common errors of believers in the

various current creeds are due to a similar cause. These persons start from some principle which they conceive to be indisputable, and proceed to draw inferences from it with the most complete confidence. An extreme instance of this is mentioned by Dr Sprenger, who was asked by a Mussulman how he could disbelieve the religion of Islam, seeing that Mahomet's name was written on the gates of paradise. In a less palpable form, the same mode of reasoning is constantly adopted among ourselves. Either we do not take the trouble to submit the evidence of the facts upon which we erect our arguments to a sufficiently rigorous scrutiny, or we fail to perceive that the axioms we take for granted are in reality neither self-evident, as our system requires, nor capable of any satisfactory demonstration.

Another and perhaps scarcely a less common kind of error arising from defective method is a failure to distinguish between adequate and inadequate evidence of religious truth. A sound and exhaustive method would not fail to disclose, if not what kind of evidence is sufficient, at least what kind of evidence is insufficient, to prove our doctrines. It is plain that if we should find arguments of the same character used by the adherents of different creeds to prove contradictory propositions, we should be forced to dismiss such arguments as of comparatively little value. Supposing, for example, that a Hebrew, desirous of proving the pre-eminence of the Jews over the Gentiles, should rely for his justification on the miraculous deliverance of the ancient Israelites from the Egyptians, and on their subsequent special protection by the Deity, his

argument, however apparently conclusive, would be considerably weakened if it were found that the annals of other nations contained similar tales evincing a similar exclusive care for their welfare on the part of their local divinities. Or if we should claim for our own school the advantage of being supported by the authority of a long succession of able, wise, and virtuous men, fully competent to judge of its truth, yet if our adversaries can produce an equally imposing list of authorities against us, we shall have gained but little by our mode of reasoning. These one-sided ways of proving the exclusive claims of a particular creed are as if a person should maintain the vast superiority of his countrymen over foreigners by a reference to the battles they had won, the territory they had conquered, and the bravery they had displayed; forgetful to inquire whether there were not other nations which had gained victories equally transcendent, made conquests equally extensive, and evinced a heroism equally admirable.

These blunders, it may be objected, do not arise exclusively from a faulty method. It is true that they have a deeper source, yet, if a correct method were pursued they would be avoided. Hence the paramount importance of fixing upon one which shall not be likely to lead us astray.

Now, the method which in the natural sciences, and in the science of language, has led to such vast results, may be, and ought to be pursued here. This method is that of comparison.

When the philologist is desirous of discovering what elements, if any, a group of languages possesses in common, and what therefore may be considered as

its fundamental stock, or essence, he compares them with one another. When the naturalist wishes to arrive at an accurate knowledge of the conformation, habits, or character of any class of animals, he can only do so by a comparison of different members of that class. How misleading our conclusions frequently are in matters like these when they are not based upon a sufficiently wide comparison, will be familiar to all. And though the analogy between these sciences and religion is far from precise, yet no good reason can be assigned why a method, which has been so successful in the one case, should be totally neglected in the latter. Nor is it enough to say that this method is capable of application to the subject in hand. Religion, owing to certain characteristics which will now be explained, lends itself with peculiar facility to an inquiry thus conducted.

A merely superficial and passing glance at the phenomena presented to us by the history and actual condition of the world brings clearly to light two facts :

1. The absolute, or all but absolute universality of some kind of religious perception or religious feeling.

2. The countless variety of forms under which that feeling has made its appearance.

History, and the works of travellers, amply prove that no considerable nation has ever been without religion, and that if it has ever been wanting, it has only been among the rudest savages, whose mental and moral condition was too low to be capable of any but the most obvious impressions of sense. Equally

may be the highest

indubitable is the second proposition. We are acquainted with no period in which each country did not possess its own special variety of religious doctrine ; we are acquainted with none in which there were not many and wide divergences within the bosom of each country among individuals, among sects, and among churches.

In this universality of a certain sentiment, accompanied by this variety of modes, we have at least a possible distinction between the Substance and the Form, between the universal emotion known as Religion, and the local or temporary colouring it may happen to assume.

It will be convenient if we call the substance by the name of FAITH, and the form by that of BELIEF. The use of these terms in these senses is no doubt slightly arbitrary, yet the shade of difference in their ordinary meaning is sufficient to justify it. Faith is a term of large and general signification, referring rather to the feelings than the reason ; whereas Belief generally implies the intellectual adoption of some definite proposition, capable of distinct statement in words.

The importance of the comparative method in the process of sifting, classifying, and ordering the elements of these respective spheres will now be apparent. For it is only by a comparison of the varieties of Belief that we can hope to arrive at an acquaintance with Faith. Setting one system beside another, carefully observing wherein they differ and wherein they agree, we may at length hope to discover what elements, if any, are to be set down to the account of Faith, and what other elements to that

of Belief. Even after a full comparison there will still be considerable danger that we may mistake tenets which are widely held, but not universal, for primordial conceptions of the human mind. Without such a comparison, we should most undoubtedly do so, for we are ever unwilling to recognise how wide are the limits of variation of which the opinions and sentiments of men are capable.

Should we, however, succeed in eliminating by our analysis all that is local, and all that is temporary, we shall possess, in what remains to us after this process, a universal truth of human nature. Observe that I speak here of a truth of human nature as distinguished from a truth of external nature. The one does not of necessity imply the other, for it is conceivable that men might universally entertain certain hopes, fears, aspirations, or convictions which were wholly groundless; the supposed objects of which had no existence whatever beyond the mind that entertained them. In the present case, then, all that the most exhaustive comparison could do would be to lead us up to the scientific fact, that there is in human beings an irresistible tendency towards certain sentiments of a spiritual kind. Whether those sentiments can be the foundation of any rational conviction it is unable to tell us.

This question, however, is fully as important as the other, and I do not propose to pass it over in silence. It will be one object of our investigation to discover how far we are entitled to treat truths of human nature as identical with objective truths. If we are obliged to confess that no inference can be drawn from the one to the other, then it will be plain that Faith,

however profoundly implanted in our hearts, does not convey to us any assurance of a single religious truth ; for the impressions which we call our Faith may be as purely illusory as the fancies of delirium, or the images of our dreams. If, on the other hand, an internal sentiment may be accepted, not so much as a basis for truth, but as itself true ; as leading, and not misleading us ; then we must further examine what are the truths which are in a manner contained in Faith, and of which Faith is the warrant.

The first Book, therefore, will deal mainly with Belief. Its object will be, by a comparison of some of the various creeds that are, or have been, accepted by men, to discover the general characteristics of Belief, and to separate these from the more special and distinctive elements peculiar to given times, districts, and races. These general characteristics will, however, belong exclusively to the region of Belief, and not to that of Faith. In other words, they will have no title to a place in a Universal Religion.

In the second Book we shall proceed to investigate the nature of Faith. We shall endeavour to lay bare the foundation of the vast superstructure of Theology and Ritual erected by the piety of the human race. We shall seek to discover, if that be possible, the element of unity amid so much variety, of permanence amid so much change. And should we be successful in the search, we shall be in a position, if not absolutely to solve, at least to attempt the solution of the great problem which ever has interested, and ever must interest mankind : Is there any such thing

as positive truth in the sphere of Religion? And if so, what is it? Or are the human faculties strictly limited to that species of knowledge which is acquired through the medium of the senses, and doomed, in all spiritual things, to be the victims of endless longings for which there is no satisfaction, and of perpetual questionings to which there is no response?

•

B O O K I.

EXTERNAL MANIFESTATIONS OF
RELIGIOUS SENTIMENT.

*φοβεροὶ δὲ βροτοῖσι μῦθοι
κέρδος πρὸς θεῶν θεραπείας.--EURIPIDES.*

$$\begin{array}{r}
 1492 \\
 \hline
 1453 - \quad 34 \\
 \hline
 1453
 \end{array}$$

732 AD

mean to an end

INTRODUCTION TO BOOK I.

RELIGIOUS Feeling, like all other human emotions, makes itself objectively known to us by its manifestations. With its subjective character we are not now concerned, our business in the present book being to treat it merely as an objective phenomenon. Thus regarded, its manifestations appear extremely various, but on closer examination they will be found to spring from a common principle. This principle is the desire felt by the human race in general to establish a relationship between itself and those superhuman or supernatural powers upon whose will it supposes the course of nature and the wellbeing of men to be dependent. Were it not for this desire, the Religious Idea—if I may venture by this term to denominate the original sentiment which is the beginning of positive religion—might remain locked up for ever in the breast of each individual who felt it. But there is innate in human beings—arriving like wanderers in the midst of a world they cannot understand—an overpowering wish to enter into some sort of communication with the mysterious agencies of whose extraordinary force they are continually conscious, but which appear to be hidden from their observation in impenetrable darkness.

Any man who seems able to give information as to

the nature of these agencies; who can declare their wishes with regard to the conduct of men; who can assert, with apparent authority, their determination to reward certain kinds of actions, and to punish others, is listened to with avidity; and if he is believed to speak truly his counsels are followed. Any tradition which is held to make known the proper manner of approaching these great powers is devoutly conserved, and becomes the foundation of the conduct of many generations. Any writing which is consecrated by popular belief as either emanating directly from these powers, or as having been composed under their authority and at their dictation, is regarded with profound reverence; and no one is allowed to question either its statements of fact or its injunctions. What are the particular characteristics which enable either men, traditions, or writings to acquire so extraordinary an authority, it is difficult, if not impossible, to say. Some approach to a reply may be made in the course of the inquiry, but much will still remain unaccounted for: one of those ultimate secrets of our nature which admit of no complete discovery. Certain it is, however, that this passionate longing to enter into some kind of relation with the unknown receives its satisfaction in the earliest stages of human society.

Man, isolated, fearful, struck with wonder at his own existence, craves to become acquainted with the Divine will, to hear the accents of the Divine voice, to offer up his petitions to those higher beings who are able to grant them, and to offer them up in such a manner that they may be willing as well as able. Impelled by this craving, the Religious Idea passes

out of its condition of vague emotion into that of positive opinion. It becomes manifest, or, if I may use an appropriate image, incarnate.

The means by which the wished-for intercourse between man and the higher powers is effected are obviously twofold: such as convey information from the worshippers to their deities, and such as convey it from the deities back to their worshippers. In other words they might be described as serving for communication upwards, or communication downwards; from mankind to God, or from God to mankind. In the former case human beings are the agents; in the latter the patients. In the former, they consciously and intentionally place themselves, or endeavour to place themselves, in correspondence with the unseen powers; in the latter, they simply receive the injunctions, reproofs, or other intimations with which those powers may think fit to favour them.

The methods by which this correspondence is sought to be effected are very various. Let us take first those which carry the thoughts of men's hearts upwards.

1. The earliest, simplest, and most universal method is the performance of certain solemnities of a regularly recurrent kind, which, as expressive of their object, I will term *consecrated actions*. Such actions are prayer, praise, sacrifice, ceremonies and rites, offerings, and, in short, all the numerous external acts comprehended under the term Worship.

2. The second is the consecration of distinct places for the purpose of carrying on such worship, or otherwise approaching the Deity more closely and solemnly than can be done on common and unsanctified ground. These I term *consecrated places*.

3. Thirdly, we have a large class of objects dedicated expressly to religious purposes. Such are votive offerings of all kinds; pictures, statues, vestments, gifts bestowed on the priesthood for employment in Divine worship, or whatever else the piety of the devotees of any deity may induce them to withdraw from their own consumption, and set apart for his service. These are *consecrated objects*.

4. Devoutly disposed persons seek to enter into a more than commonly direct relation with their god by dedication of their own persons to him, such dedication being signified by some special characteristics in their mode of life. Such are ascetics of all descriptions, whether they be known as Essenes, Nazarites, Bonzes, monks, or any other term. I describe them henceforward as *consecrated persons*.

5. Lastly, we have a class of men who are also consecrated, but who differ from the preceding in that the object of their consecration is not personal but social. They are devoted to the service of the deity not in order that they individually may enter into more intimate relations with him, but that they may carry on the needful intercourse between the community at large and its gods. To emphasise this distinction, I call them *consecrated mediators*.

The second great division of our subject is that which treats of the several modes by which divine ideas are carried downwards. And here we will follow a classification corresponding as nearly as possible to that adopted in the preceding section.

1. First, then, the Deity conveys his will or his intention through events; such as omens, auguries,

miracles, dreams, and many other phenomena. All these may be termed *holy events*.

2. Secondly, there are certain spots which are either favourable to the reception of supernatural communications, or have on some occasion been the scene of such a communication, which we will call *holy places*.

3. Thirdly, certain objects are held to possess mysterious powers, as that of healing disease. Relics, articles that have been used by holy men, and such-like remains, come within this category. They may be described as *holy objects*.

4. All communities above the very lowest employ professional persons for the express object of conveying to them the will of their Deity, or discovering his intentions as to the future. The most usual name for such functionaries is that of Priest, and for the sake of embracing all ecclesiastical or quasi-ecclesiastical classes under one designation I shall call them *holy orders*.

5. The possession of a professional character distinguishes them from the next class, who serve as the fifth channel between God and man, but who differ from the fourth in the circumstance of being self-appointed. Prophets (for it is of these I am speaking) receive no regular consecration; nevertheless the part they have played in the religious history of mankind has been of such transcendent importance that they deserve to be placed in a class apart under the title of *holy persons*.

6. Sixthly, there remains a mode of communication from God to man to which there is nothing corresponding on our side; it is that of written documents. Man has never (so far as I am aware) imagined him-

self capable of sending a letter or written composition of any kind to God; but God is supposed, through the medium of human instruments, to have embodied his thoughts in writing for the benefit of the human race. The result is the very important category of *holy books*.

EXTERNAL MANIFESTATIONS OF RELIGIOUS SENTIMENT.



First Part.

MEANS OF COMMUNICATION UPWARDS.



CHAPTER I.

CONSECRATED ACTIONS.

ADORATION, or worship, is a direct result of one of the most universal of human instincts. After the instincts which impel us to provide for the necessities of the body, and to satisfy the passion of love, there is perhaps none more potent or more general. Men are driven to pray by an irresistible impulse. Differing widely as to the object of worship ; differing not less widely as to its mode ; differing in a minor degree as to the blessings it secures ; they are agreed as to the fundamental ideas which it involves. In the first place it presupposes a power superior to, or at any rate different from, the power of man ; in the second place it assumes a belief that this superhuman or non-human power can be approached by his worshippers ; can be induced to listen to their desires, and to grant their petitions.

Of the first of the two elements thus implied in prayer, this is not the appropriate place to speak at length. In a very early and primitive stage of man's

existence, he begins to feel his dependence upon powers invisible to his mortal eyes, whose mode of action he can but imperfectly comprehend. His way of conceiving these beings will depend upon his mental elevation, upon historical influences, upon local conditions, and other causes. Among very rude nations, the commonest and apparently most unimpressive objects will serve as fetishes, or incarnations of the mysterious force. Pieces of wood, stones, ornaments worn on the person, or almost anything, may under some circumstances do duty in this capacity. It is a further stage of progress when the more conspicuous objects of nature, lofty mountains, rivers, trees, fountains, and so forth, are deified, to the exclusion of more insignificant things. Still higher is the adoration of bodies which do not belong to this earth at all, and whose nature is, therefore, more mysterious—the sun, the moon, the planets or the stars, the clouds and tempests, the winds, and similar imposing phenomena. And this stage passes naturally into one where the gods, at first merely forces of nature personified, lose their character of forces, and become exclusively persons. They are then conceived as beings in human form, but endowed with much more than human faculties. Actual persons, especially the ancestors of the living generation, are also the frequent recipients of religious adoration. By other races, or by the same races at a later period, the numerous gods of polytheism are merged in one supreme god, to whom the others are subordinated as agents of his will, or before whose grandeur they disappear altogether; while this worship of powers conceived as beneficent is very frequently accompanied, more or

less avowedly, by a parallel worship of powers conceived as malevolent, and whom, by reason of that very malevolence, it is occasionally deemed the more needful to conciliate.

The second element—the conviction that these deities are accessible to human requests—is shown both by the fact of worship being offered and by the mode in which it is conducted. In the first place, it is plain that prayer would not be offered at all but for the belief that it exercises some influence on the beings prayed to. But the theory does not require that they should be equally amenable to it at all times, from all persons, or in whatever way it is uttered. On the contrary, accessibility to prayer implies in those who receive it an inclination to listen with attention to the language in which they are addressed, and to be more or less moved by it according to its nature.

Reasoning from the authorities of earth whom he knows, to those of heaven whom he does not know, the primitive man concludes that the best way of obtaining the satisfaction of his wishes from the latter will be to address them in a tone of humble supplication, intermingled with such laudatory epithets as he deems most suitable to the deity invoked, or most likely to be agreeable to his ear. Hence we have the two devotional acts of prayer and praise, which in all religions constantly accompany one another, and constitute the simplest, most natural, and most ancient expression on the part of human beings of their consciousness of an overruling power, and of their desire to enter into relations with that dreaded and venerated agency.

Prayer in its original form is simply a request for

some personal advantage addressed by the worshippers to their god. Whatever loftier associations it may afterwards acquire, its intention at the outset is unquestionably this, as may be proved by reference to innumerable instances, quoted by travellers or scholars, of savage prayer, where the benefit expected from the deity is demanded in the most barefaced manner. But even after men have long ceased to be savages, the primary object of prayer may easily be discerned; sometimes plainly avowed by the persons praying, sometimes cloaked under complimentary phrases or devotional utterances. However disguised, the fact remains, that prayer was originally designed, and to a large extent is designed still, to obtain certain advantages for ourselves, either as individuals, or as a community. Private prayer, partaking to some extent of the character of a meditation, may, and no doubt often does, form an exception to this rule; but even this very frequently falls under it, and of the prayer offered by tribes or nations it always holds good.

Two excellent specimens of primitive prayer are given by Brinton in his "*Myths of the New World*." According to that writer, the Nootka Indian, on preparing for war, thus expresses his wishes:—"Great Quahootzee, let me live, not be sick, find the enemy, not fear him, find him asleep, and kill a great many of him."

The next instance, quoted by him from Father Breboeuf, is equally apposite. It is the prayer of a Huron:—"Oki, thou who livest in this spot, I offer thee tobacco. Help us, save us from shipwreck, defend us from our enemies, give us a good trade, and bring us back safe and sound to our villages."¹

¹ M. N. W., p. 297.

The Kafirs, according to Shooter, address the "spirits" whom they worship in the following style: "Take care of me, take care of my children, take care of my wives, take care of all my people. Remove the sickness, and let my child recover. Give me plenty of children—many boys and a few girls. Give me abundance of food and cattle. Make right all my people."¹

Of the negroes on the Caribbean Islands, Oldendorp says, "Their concerns which they lay before God in their prayers, even on their knees, have reference only to the body, to health, fine weather, a good harvest, victory over their enemies, and so forth."²

The Samoans, on taking their evening "cup of ava," would thus express their petitions to the gods: "Here is ava for you, O gods! Look kindly towards this family: let it prosper and increase; and let us all be kept in health. Let our plantations be productive, let fruit grow, and may there be abundance of food for us, your creatures. Here is ava for you, our war-gods! Let there be a strong and numerous people for you in this land. Here is ava for you, O sailing gods! Do not come on shore at this place; but be pleased to depart along the ocean to some other land."³

Mr Turner, to whom I am indebted for the above prayer, remarks that in Tanna, another of the Polynesian islands, the chief of a village repeats a short prayer at the evening meal, "asking health, long life, good crops, and success in battle."⁴

The authors of the Vedic hymns, though standing on a far higher level of civilisation, do not differ essentially from these rude people in the character of the

¹ K. N., p. 165.

² G. d. M., p. 325.

³ N. Y., p. 200.

⁴ Ibid., p. 85.

objects for which they pray. The several deities are continually invoked to grant health, wealth, prosperity, posterity, and other temporal blessings. Thus (to quote one instance among many) in Mandala 1, Sûkta 64, translated by Max Müller, the Maruts are requested to grant "strength, glorious, invincible in battle, brilliant, wealth - conferring, praiseworthy, known to all men ;" and again, "wealth, durable, rich in men, defying all onslaughts ; wealth a hundred and a thousandfold, always increasing."¹ The liturgies of the Zend-Avesta, while sometimes assuming a loftier strain, frequently move upon the same level. The same tone is to be observed in the Hebrew Scriptures. Solomon's prayer, for instance, at the dedication of the temple, may be taken as an enumeration of the objects commonly prayed for among the ancient Hebrews. It specifies among the objects to be obtained at the hands of Jehovah, the prevention of famine, of pestilence, blasting, mildew, locust or caterpillar, plague or sickness.² Christian liturgies contain the same universal elements, though intermingled with many others, and not in general put forward with the same crudity of language.

Besides these general objects, there are others of an ephemeral and special kind which are generally drawn within the sphere of prayer. Rain is a common object of prayer, and other changes of weather are equally prayed for if they are held to be important. Callaway, for example, was informed by a "very old man" in South Africa that "if it does not rain, the heads of villages and petty chiefs assemble and go to a black chief; they converse and pray

¹ R. V. S., i. 64. 14, 15.—Vol. i. p. 93.

² 1 Kings viii. 37.

for rain.”¹ Another native described the mode of supplication more particularly. A certain chieftain named Utshaka “came and made his prayers greater than those who preceded him.” When he desired rain, he sang the following song, which “consists of musical sounds merely, without any meaning:”—

“*One Part*—I ya wu ; a wu ; o ye i ye.”

“*Second Part or Response*—I ya wo.”

And this prayer, so touching in its simplicity, was as successful as the most elaborate composition of Jewish prophet or Christian bishop ; for the narrator states that Utshaka “Sang a song and prayed to the Lord of heaven ; and asked his forefathers to pray for rain to the Lord of heaven. *And it rained.*”² The efficacy of prayer is plainly independent of the creed of him who offers it.

The Mexicans held an important annual festival in the month of May, of which the main purpose was to entreat for water from the sky, this being the season at which there was the greatest need of rain.³ They used to address an elaborate prayer to a god named 'Tlaloc, the king of the terrestrial paradise, to obtain deliverance from drought. They entreated him not to visit the offences they had committed with such severity as to continue the privation under which they were labouring.⁴ The 'Tannese, when put to much inconvenience by the dust falling from a certain volcano, “were in the habit of praying to their gods for a change of wind.”⁵ Certain other South

¹ R. S. A., vol. i. p. 59.

² Ibid., vol. i. p. 92.

³ H. I., b. v. ch. 28.

⁴ This prayer, which is too long to quote, may be found in Aglio, A. M., v. 372, and in Sahagun, C. N. E., book vi. chap. 8. According to Sahagun, it contains “muy delicada materia.”

⁵ N. Y., p. 75.

Sea Islanders used to pray to their gods to avert the supposed calamity of a lunar eclipse. "As the eclipse passes off, they think it is all owing to their prayers," a mode of reasoning which presents an exact parallel to that employed by many Christians.

Sir John Davis gives a very interesting specimen of a prayer for rain employed by Taou-Kuâng, the Emperor of China, in 1832, on the occasion of a long drought in that country.¹ As may be expected from so civilised a people, this prayer rises far above the outspoken begging of savage petitions, yet it has in substance precisely the same end. The emperor describes himself as "scorched with grief," and pathetically inquires whether he has been remiss in sacrifice, has been proud or prodigal, irreverent, unjust, or wanting in discretion in the exercise of patronage. Here we see the intrusion of the theological idea that calamities are sent as punishments for sin, which plays no small part in Christian theology; but this only serves to veil, without effacing, the essential character of the prayer. The very same notion, that sin is visited by unfavourable weather, is found in the prayer of Solomon, whose mind upon this question seems to have been in the same stage of thought as that attained by the Chinese emperor. "When heaven is shut up, and there is no rain, because they have sinned against thee,"² is the language of Solomon: "My sins are so numerous that it is hopeless to escape their consequences," so runs the penitent confession of Taou-Kuâng. But whatever may be the cause to which the drought is attributed, the prayer, whether uttered by Chinaman, Jew, or

¹ Chinese, vol. ii. p. 75.

² 1 Kings viii. 35.

Christian, is still simply the petition of the Amazulu, the South Sea Islander, or the native American—a request that God will so influence the phenomena of the skies as to suit our convenience. The notion that this object may sometimes be attained by our prayers is not extinct even among ourselves.

- Other special occasions are sometimes held to call for prayer. Such are national calamities; as a pestilence among men or cattle, the illness of some eminent person, and other similar misfortunes. A good harvest is very generally prayed for; so is victory in time of war. The ancient Aryans, who composed the Vedic hymns one thousand years or more before Christ, continually prayed for this last blessing; and we ourselves, when engaged in warfare, piously continue the same custom.

Very frequently the notion of a bargain between the god and his worshipper appears in prayer. The worshipper claims to have rendered some service for which the god ought in equity to reward him; or he holds out the discontinuance of his former devotion as a motive to induce the concession of his desires. The constant conjunction of praise with prayer is explicable on this principle of a reciprocity of benefits. If the worshipper gains much from the god, yet the god gains something from him, being addressed in a strain of unbounded eulogy. His power, his greatness, his goodness, his excellences of all kinds are vaunted in glowing terms, no doubt sincerely used by the worshipper, but repeated and accumulated to satiety from an impression that they are pleasing to their object, and may dispose him to beneficence. Titles thus bestowed upon their deities are aptly

described by the Amazulus as "laud-giving names."¹ In the Vedic hymns and in the Psalms, the deities spoken of are constantly addressed by such complimentary epithets. One of the hymns to the Maruts begins by announcing the poet's intention to praise "their ancient greatness." And at the conclusion, after he has done so, he says, "May this praise, O Maruts, . . . approach you (asking) for offspring to our body, together with food. May we find food, and a camp with running water."² The Psalmists were never weary of exalting the extraordinary might and majesty of Jehovah, mingling petitions with panegyric; and a large portion of the worship of Christians consists in expressions of pious admiration at the extraordinary goodness of their God, especially for his redemption of the world which he had himself condemned. All these extravagant eulogies betray a latent impression that the Deity is, after all, a very arbitrary personage, and may be moved to more merciful conduct than he would otherwise pursue by large doses of flattery.

Still more clearly does the idea of a commercial relationship with the gods make its appearance in a poet who stands on a higher intellectual and moral level than the writers of the Hebrew Psalms, namely Aischylos. In the *Seven against Thebes*, Eteokles implores Zeus, the Earth, and the tutelar deities of the city to protect Thebes; and subjoins as a motive for compliance, "And I trust that what I say is our common interest; for a prosperous city honours the gods."³ And there is a similar appeal to the divine

¹ R. S. A., vol. i. p. 72, and vol. ii. p. 149.

² R. V. S., vol. i. pp. 197, 201.

³ Aisch., Sept. c. Th. 76, 77 (Dindorf).

selfishness further on in the same play, where the chorus inquires of the gods what better plain they can expect to obtain in exchange for this one, if they shall suffer it to pass into the enemy's hands.¹

In the *Choephoræ*, Zeus is distinctly asked in the prayer of Agamemnon's children whence he can expect to obtain the sacrifice and honours which have been paid him by Orestes and Electra if he should suffer them to perish.² While in the *Electra* of Sophokles the converse motive of gratitude is appealed to; the god Apollon being desired to remember not what he may get, but what he already has got, from the piety of his suppliant.³ And Jacob, who was a good hand at a bargain, makes his terms with Jehovah in a thoroughly business-like spirit. "*If* God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father's house in peace; *then* shall the Lord be my God; and this stone, which I have set up for a pillar, shall be God's house: and of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee." The adoption of Jehovah as Jacob's God being thus entirely dependent on the performance by that Deity of his share in the contract.⁴

Sometimes it is quaintly suggested that were the worshipper in the place of the god, *he* would not neglect the interests of his devotee. Thus, the author of a hymn in the *Rig-Veda-Sanhita*, addressing the Gods of Tempest, exclaims: "If you, sons of Prisni, were mortals, and your worshipper an immortal,—

¹ Aisch., *Sept. c. Th.* 304.

² Aisch., *Choeph.*, 255.

³ Soph. *El.*, 1376 (Schneidewin).

⁴ Gen. xxviii. 20-22.

then never should your praiser be unwelcome, like a deer in pasture grass, nor should he go on the path of Yama."¹ Another unsophisticated poet gives the following hint to the god Indra, the Hindu Jupiter: "Were I, Indra, like thee, the sole lord of wealth, the singer of my praises should be rich in cattle."² And the same god is asked elsewhere in the Veda: "When wilt thou make us happy? for it is just this that is desired."³ With equal plainness is the expectation of a *quid pro quo* enunciated in one of the most ancient hymns, contained in the sacred books of the Parsees:—"Every adoration, O True One, consists in actions whereby one may obtain good possessions, full of security, and happiness round about."⁴

More emphatically still is this conception of a reciprocity of benefits expressed in another consecrated action, that of Sacrifice. Sacrifice holds a most important place in all religions. It originates in a stage of the human mind which, if not quite as primitive as that which gives rise to prayer, is nevertheless so early as to be practicably inseparable from it. Wherever we find prayer, we find sacrifice; but as the latter is generally found organised under definite forms, and confined to certain specified objects, we may conclude that in the state in which we recognise it, it implies a certain degree of regulation and forethought on the part of religious authorities which we do not meet with in the simplest types of prayer. Prayer is often the mere natural outpouring of our wants before a power which is considered capable of fulfilling them; sacrifice, though doubtless in the first

¹ R. V. S., vol. i. p. 65.

² S. V., i. 2. i. 3. p. 218.

³ S. V., i. 5. i. 3. p. 233.

⁴ F. G. vol. ii. p. 54.—Yama 51. i.

instance an equally artless offering of gifts to beings who are regarded with veneration and gratitude, is soon converted into a formal presentation of acknowledged dues, performed under ecclesiastical supervision. No doubt prayer also tends to assume this formal character; but we have hitherto considered it in its uncorrupted aspect; its treatment in its later developments belongs to another portion of this chapter.

The idea which presides over sacrifice is obvious. The sacrificer argues that if he can make acceptable presents to the gods, they will smile upon him and be disposed to promote his ends; whereas if he keeps the whole of his possessions for worldly purposes, they will regard him with indignation, and refuse him their assistance when he may happen to stand in need of it. There is also involved in sacrifice a sense of gratitude: the gods having given us the fruits of the earth, it behoves us to make some acknowledgment of their bounty.

Such notions, once propounded, were certain to be fertile. Every motive of piety and of interest would combine to support them. The piety of the worshippers, coupled with their hopes of advantage, would be stimulated by the self-interest of the priests, who generally share in the sacrifices offered. If any piece of good fortune occurred to one who was devout and liberal in sacrificing, it would be attributed to the satisfaction felt by the gods at his exemplary conduct. If ill fortune befell those who had neglected to sacrifice, this would be an equally manifest indication of their high displeasure. As soon, therefore, as the step was taken—and it was one of the earliest in the

religious history of man—of instituting sacrifices to idols or to deities, the worshippers vied with one another in the liberality of their offerings. Adopted as a mode of propitiating the celestial beings by spontaneous gifts, it became, among all nations whose religious belief had arrived at a state of fixity and consolidation, a positive duty; much as monarchs have frequently exacted large and burdensome contributions under the guise of voluntary presents.

Illustrations of this conception, that sacrifice is a sort of payment for services rendered or to be rendered, might be found abundantly in many quarters. Perhaps it is seldom more quaintly expressed than by the Amazulus, who, when going to battle, sacrifice to the Amatongo, or manes of their ancestors, in order that these, in their own language, “may have no cause of complaint, because they have made amends to them, and made them bright.” On reaching the enemy, they say, “Can it be, since we have made amends to the Amadhlozi, that they will say we have wronged them by anything?” And when it comes to fighting, they are filled with valour, observing that “the Amatongo will turn their backs on us without cause.”¹

The objects of sacrifice are very various, but it is noticeable that they are almost invariably things held in esteem among men, and either possessing a considerable value as commodities, or capable by their properties of ministering to their pleasure. All sacrifices of meat and corn or other edibles belong to the former class; those of flowers to the latter, for these, though of little value in the market, yet give great

¹ R. S. A., vol. ii. p. 133.

pleasure, and are much esteemed. An exception is indeed presented by the wild hordes in Kamtschatka, who, according to Steller, offer nothing to their gods but what is valueless to themselves.¹ If this statement does not originate in a misunderstanding of the traveller, the fact must be due to the singularly low religiosity of those people, who seem to have little reverence for the very objects of their worship.

The most valuable sacrifice that can possibly be made—that of human beings—has always been common among savage or uncivilised nations. Thus, in some of the South Sea Islands, human sacrifices were “fearfully common.”² They prevailed among some of the negro tribes known to the missionary Oldendorp.³

In Mexico, where the natives had arrived at a far higher condition, human sacrifices still prevailed, though the original brutality of the rite was modified by the fact of the victims being enemies. Indeed, Moteçuma, when at the height of his power, expressly refused to conquer a certain province which he might easily have added to his dominions; assigning as his first reason, that he desired to keep the Mexican youth in practice; as his second and principal one, that he might reserve a province for the supply of victims to sacrifice to the gods.⁴

At the great Mexican festival of the Jubilee, however, it was not an enemy, but a slave, who was offered. This slave had represented the idol during the period of a year, and had received the greatest honour during his term of office, at the end of which

¹ Kamtschatka, p. 265.

² N. M. E., p. 547.

³ G. d. M., p. 329.

⁴ H. I., b. v. ch. 20.

his head was severed from his body by the priest, who then held it as high as he could, and showed it to the Sun and to the idol.¹

Next in value to the human race are cattle, and these too are frequently immolated in honour of the gods. Thus among the Kafirs, "the animals offered are exclusively cattle and goats. The largest ox in a herd is specially reserved for sacrifices on important occasions; it is called the Ox of the Spirits, and is never sold except in cases of extreme necessity."² Here we find it expressly stated that it is the best ox, in other words, the most valuable portion of the sacrificer's property, which is devoted to the gods. And the principle which leads in Natal to this reservation of the best will be found predominating over sacrifice throughout the world. The Soosoos, a people inhabiting the west coast of Africa, are so careful to propitiate their deity, that they "never undertake any affair of importance until they have sacrificed to him a bullock."³

Other domestic and edible animals, being of great importance to mankind, are held worthy of the honour of sacrifice. The same writer to whom I owe the last quotation tells us of the Western Africans, that "before they begin to sow their plantations, they sacrifice a sheep, goat, fowl, or fish to the ay-min, to beg that their crop may abound; for were this neglected, they are persuaded that nothing would grow there."⁴ Oldendorp, who was particularly familiar with the Caribbean Islands, describes the sacrifices of the negroes as consisting of "oxen, cows, sheep, goats, hens, palm-cil, brandy, yams, &c."⁵

¹ H. I., b. v. ch. 28.

³ N. A., vol. i. p. 230.

² Kafirs, p. 165.

⁴ Ibid., vol. i. p. 223.

⁵ G. d. M., p. 329.

Besides porcelain collars, tobacco, maize, and skins, the American Indians used to offer "entire animals, especially dogs, on the borders of difficult or dangerous roads or rocks, or by the side of rapids." These offerings were made to the spirits who presided in these places. The great value attached by the natives of America to the dog is well known, and it is deserving of remark that the dog was the commonest victim, and that at the war-festival, which was a sort of sacrifice, it was always dogs who were offered.

In China, the animals slain are "bullocks, heifers, sheep, and pigs," which are duly purified for a certain period beforehand.¹ Among the Jews, pigs, whose flesh was regarded as impure, were not offered; bullocks, goats, and sheep were the chief sacrificial animals; and extreme care was taken in their law that they should be entirely without blemish; that is, that, like the ox of the Kafirs, they should be the best obtainable.² This is a remarkable illustration of the tendency to offer only articles of value in human estimation to God; for here that which would be good enough for men is treated as unfit for Jehovah. Animals of lesser magnitude are sometimes offered; as, for instance, the quails which the Mexicans used to sacrifice.³ Birds are not unfrequently chosen as fitting objects to present to the gods. Among the Ibos, a negro tribe, it is the custom for women, six weeks after childbirth, to present a pair of hens as an offering, which, however, are not killed, but liberated after certain ceremonies. In like manner, the Hebrew woman after her delivery was enjoined to bring a lamb and a pigeon or turtle-dove; or, if she were unable

¹ C. O., vol. ii. p. 192. ² Lev. xxii. 17-25. ³ H. I., b. v. ch. 18.

to bring the lamb, two young pigeons or two turtle-doves.¹

In addition to animals, a considerable variety of objects is sacrificed, generally the fruits of the earth or flowers. There is, however, no limit to the number of things which may be held suitable for presentation to the gods. Thus, in Samoa (in Polynesia), "the offerings were principally cooked food."² In other islands "the first-fruits are presented to the gods,"³ a practice which corresponds, as the missionary who records it justly remarks, to that of the ancient Israelites. The Red Indians used to offer to their spirits "petun, tobacco, or birds." In honour of the Sun, and even of subordinate spirits, they would throw into the fire everything they were in the habit of using, and which they acknowledged as received from them.⁴ Acosta divides the sacrifices of the Mexicans and Peruvians into three classes: the first, of inanimate objects; the second, of animals; the third, of men. In the first class are included cocoa, maize, coloured feathers, sea-shells, gold and silver, and fine linen.⁵ Among the sacrifices offered by the Incas to the sun, the most esteemed, according to Garcilasso de la Vega, were lambs, then sheep, then barren ewes. Besides these, they sacrificed tame rabbits, all *edible* birds (remark the limitation), and fat of beasts, as well as all the grains and vegetables up to cocoa, and the finest linen (observe again the care that it should be fine).⁶ At a certain Hindu festival described by Wilson, a goddess named

¹ Lev. xii. 6-8.

² N. Y., p. 241.

³ Ibid., p. 327.

⁴ N. F., vol. iii. pp. 347, 348.

⁵ H. I., b. v. ch. 18.

⁶ C. R., b. ii. ch. 8.

Varadā Chaturthī “is worshipped with offerings of flowers, of incense, or of lights, with platters of sugar and ginger, or milk or salt, with scarlet or saffron-tinted strings and golden bracelets.”¹ Among the Parsees the sacrifices consist of little loaves of bread, and of Haoma, the sacred plant. The Indian Parsees send from time to time to Kirman to obtain Haoma-branches from this holy territory.² The Parsees also offer flowers, fruits, rice, odoriferous grains, perfumes, milk, roots of certain trees, and meat. The Jews, like them, offered the productions of the soil in sacrifice.

Beauty, and even utility, when not accompanied by considerable value in exchange, do not suffice to constitute fitness for religious sacrifice. Common plants and shrubs, branches of trees, wild birds or insects, are some of them among the most beautiful productions of nature; yet they are not sacrificed. Stones and wood are both useful, but they are obtained, as a rule, at little cost; and they are not sacrificed. Flowers, which certainly have no high value, were sometimes offered to idols in the form of wreaths and garlands: they scarcely constitute an exception to the rule, for they are prized as ornaments by men, and the process of plucking and weaving them into appropriate shapes imposes trouble—the equivalent of cost—on the devotee. It is plainly not owing to any accidental circumstance that highly valuable objects have been selected by all the nations of the earth as alone appropriate for religious sacrifice. Two reasons may be assigned for this selection. In the first place, the general

¹ W. W., vol. ii. pp. 184, 185.

² Z. A., vol. ii. p. 535.

assimilation of deities to mankind goes far to account for it. Everywhere, and at all times—as we shall have occasion frequently to observe in this work—men have reasoned as to the divine nature from their knowledge of their own. A noteworthy instance of this is to be seen in Malachi, who does not scruple to tell the Jews that their God feels the same kind of offence at the poverty of their offerings as a human governor would do. “And if,” says that prophet, “ye offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? and if ye offer the lame and sick, is it not evil? *offer it now unto thy governor*; will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person? saith the Lord of hosts.” A few verses later he recurs to the sorrow felt by Jehovah at such insults. “And ye bring that which is robbed, and the lame, and the sick; thus ye bring an offering: should I accept this of your hand? saith the Lord. But cursed be the deceiver, which hath in his flock a male, and voweth and sacrificeth unto the Lord a bad female.”¹ It would be difficult to find the theory of God’s resemblance to man expressed in a cruder form. Even as a governor will show the greatest favour to those who approach him with the costliest gifts, so the mouthpiece of the Hebrew deity declares in his name that he must have the pick of his servants’ flocks—the males, not the females, the sound and the perfect, not the sickly or the maimed. In a precisely similar spirit, it is enjoined in one of the sacred books of the Buddhists that no spoilt victuals or drinks may be used in sacrifice.²

¹ I adopt Ewald’s rendering of *משחת*, Mal. i. 8, 13, 14; P. A. B., vol. iii. p. 218.

² Wassiljew, p. 211.

Men's notion of their god was often derived, like Malachi's, not only from human nature, but from those who were by no means the best specimens of human nature,—the rulers. The religious emotion, imbued with this conception of its deities, shrank through a sense of piety from the irreverent, and, as it seemed, sacrilegious act of presenting them with anything but the best. But there was another reason which, doubtless, had its weight. Not only must the offering be of a kind acceptable to the god to whom it was given; it must also impose some cost upon the worshipper. Religious sentiment imperatively required that there should be an actual sacrifice of something which the owner valued, and the surrender of which imposed a burden upon him. This seemed to be involved in the very notion of sacrifice. Its sense and purpose was, that the devotee, coming to his god, and desiring to obtain some favour from him, should show the high importance he attached to it by parting with some portion of his possessions. And plainly this portion must be such as to indicate by its character the esteem and reverence felt by the worshipper for the being whom he worshipped. To indicate this, it must be something which he would unwillingly resign but for his religious feelings. Hence a special part of the fruits of the soil would be an appropriate offering. It would involve a real diminution in the wealth of the worshipper, a real surrender of something useful and valuable to mankind. To these two reasons may be added a third, which, no doubt, must have had its weight. In many cases, a portion of the sacrifices was the property of the priests. As will be more fully shown hereafter, the priesthood fre-

quently contrived to transfer to themselves the piety which was felt towards the gods. Hence the sacrifices, originally given to the divine beings, were in part appropriated by their ministers; and it was obviously of importance to them that the things sacrificed should be such as they could profit by and enjoy.

It sometimes happens that the sacrifice, or a portion of it, is consumed either by the worshippers in general, or by their priests. A case of the former kind is mentioned by Oldendorp. When the young men among the Tembus (negroes) are going to battle, the old men offer sheep and hens to their god Zioo for their success; the blood and bowels they bestow upon Zioo, and the flesh they eat themselves.¹ Sometimes the thing sacrificed is itself regarded as an idol or god, and is eaten religiously, under a belief that it is a food of peculiar efficacy. Such is the case with the Christian sacrament; and such was the case, too, with the remarkable custom observed among the Mexicans at the feast of Vitziliputzli, where an idol composed of corn and honey used to be solemnly consecrated, and afterwards distributed to be eaten by the people, who received it with extreme reverence, awe, and tears, as the flesh and bones of the god himself.² It is an exception, however, when the laity partake in the consumption of the sacrifices; they are generally reserved for the priests. Among the Jews, it was the privilege of the priests to eat certain portions of the animals brought for sacrifice; and in like manner the Parsee priest, or Zaota, eats the bread and drinks the Haoma.³ And it deserves

¹ G. d. M., p. 330. ² H. I., b. v. ch. 24. ³ Av., vol. ii. p. lxxii.

especial mention, that the Haoma, a plant of which the juice is thus drunk in certain rites both in the Indian and the Parsee religions, is in both considered a god as well as a plant; just as the wine of the Christian sacrament is both the juice of the grape and the blood of the Redeemer.

In the above cases, food consecrated to the gods is eaten by men. The converse practice, that of bestowing a portion of the ordinary food of men upon the gods, is also common. The habit of the ancients of making libations is well known. But the same practice has prevailed, or prevails still, in many distinct parts of the world. A traveller who visited Tartary in the thirteenth century states that it was the custom of the Tartar chiefs of 1000 or 100 men, before they eat or drank anything, to offer some of it to an idol which they always kept in the middle of their dwelling-place.¹ In Samoa, when a family feast was held in honour of the household gods, "a cup of their intoxicating ava draught was poured out as a drink-offering."² Among the Soosoos, on the west coast of Africa, a custom prevails "which resembles the ancient practice of pouring out a libation: they seldom or never drink spirits, wine, &c., without spilling a little of it upon the ground, and wetting the gree-gree or fetish hung round the neck: at the same time they mutter a kind of short prayer."³ Again, in Sierra Leone, "when they want to render their devil propitious to any undertaking, they gene-

¹ Av., vol. i. p. 8.

² Bergeron, Voyage de Carpin, art. iii., p. 30.

³ N. Y., p. 239.

⁴ N. A., p. 123.

gion itself, in which the sacrifice of the founder upon the cross embodies all those notions which are held to legitimate the custom of sacrificing among heathen nations. We have first the notion of an angry and exacting deity, who can only be rendered placable towards mankind by the surrender to him of some valuable thing; we have, consequently, the sacrifice of the most valuable thing that can possibly be offered, namely, the life of a human being; we have, lastly, the belief that this sacrifice was accepted, and that promises of mercy were in consequence held out to the human race. By a peculiar exaltation of the idea, the life thus given up is declared to be that of his own son—a conception by which the value of the sacrifice, and consequently the advantages it is capable of procuring, are indefinitely heightened.

Thus the idea of sacrifice is carried to its extreme limits in the religion of Christendom. Had it not been for the absolute necessity of some sacrifice being offered to God, there would—according to the theory of the Christian faith—have been absolutely no reason for the execution of Christ. He might have taught every doctrine associated with his name, performed every miracle related in the Gospels, have drawn to himself every disciple named in them, and yet have died, like the Buddha, in the calm of a venerated and untroubled old age. He was obliged to undergo this painful and melancholy death, if we accept the general belief of Christendom, solely because God required a sacrifice, and because without that sacrifice he could not forgive the offences of mankind.

Simple prayer and sacrifice are, then, the most primitive and most general methods by which man

approaches those whom his nature impels him to worship. But as these acts are repeated from time to time, and as their frequent repetition is supposed to be highly agreeable to their objects, it naturally happens that some particular mode of performing them comes to be preferred to others. By and by, the mode of worship usually adopted will become habitual; and a habit once formed will be strengthened by every repetition of the acts in question. Not only will certain forms of prayer, certain ways of sacrificing, certain postures, certain gestures, and a certain order of proceeding become established as usual and regular, but they will be regarded as the only appropriate and respectful forms, every attempt to depart from them being treated as a sacrilegious innovation. The form will be deemed no less essential than the substance.

Hence Ritual, which we do not find in the most primitive religions, but which is discovered in all of those that have advanced to a higher type. Even in the earliest Vedic hymns—those of the Rig-Veda-Sanhita—we perceive clear traces of an established ritual from the manner in which the sacrifices are spoken of as having been duly offered. In the Zend-Avesta, elaborate ritualistic directions are given for certain specified purposes, especially for that of purification after any defilement. The oldest books of the Jewish Bible are in like manner full of instructions for the due observance of ritual. Both the Buddhists, who broke off from Brahmanism, and the Christians, who made a schism from Judaism, established a ritual of their own; and this ritual was soon regarded as no less sacred than that which they had abandoned.

Everywhere, when religion has passed out of its first unsettled condition, we find a fixed ritual, and its fixity is one of its most striking features. Dogmas, in spite of the efforts of sacerdotal orders, inevitably change. If the words in which they are expressed remain unaltered, yet the meaning attached to them continually varies. But ritual does not change, or changes only when some great convulsion uproots the settled institutions of the country. From age to age the same forms and the same prayers remain, sometimes long after their original meaning has been forgotten.

Thus prayer, ceasing to be spontaneous and irregular, becomes formal, ceremonial, and regular. And as there are many occasions besides sacrifice on which men desire to pray, so there will be many besides this on which the craving for order, and the readiness to believe that God is better pleased with one form of devotion than another, will lead to the establishment of ritual.

Rites may be performed daily, weekly, or at any other interval. Sometimes, indeed, they are still more frequent, haunting the everyday life of the devotee, and intruding upon his commonest actions. Thus the Parsees are required to repeat certain prayers on rising, before and after eating, on going to bed, on cutting their nails or their hair, and on several other natural occasions, besides praying to the sun three times a day.¹ The Jews are encompassed with obligations which, if less minute, are of a like burdensome character. A devout Jew has to repeat a certain prayer on rising; he has to wear garments of a particular kind, and to wash and dress in a par-

¹ Z. A., vol. ii. p. 564-567.

ticular order.¹ Mussulmans are commanded to pray five times a day, turning their faces towards Mecca.²

Ritual, however, is not always of this purely personal nature, but is generally performed by a congregation to whose needs it refers, or by priests on their behalf. And in this case, again, a longer or shorter interval may elapse between the recurrence of the rites. In the Mexican temples, for instance, the ministering priests were in the habit of performing a service before their idols four times a day.³ "The perpetual exercise of the priests," says Acosta, speaking of these temples, "is to offer incense to the idols." The ritual of the Catholic Church, like that of the ancient Mexicans, is repeated every day. The morning and evening services of the Church of England were framed with the same intention; and the Ritualistic clergy, rightly conceiving the teaching of their Church, have introduced the practice of so employing them. Weekly or bi-monthly observances prevail among Hindus, Singhalese, Jews, and Christians. With the Hindus, the seventh lunar day, both during the fortnight of the moon's waxing and during that of her waning, is a festival, the first seventh day in the month being peculiarly holy, and observed with very special rites. More than this, the weekly period is known to them; for, according to Wilson, "a sort of sanctity is, or was, attached even to Sunday, and fasting on it was considered obligatory or meritorious."⁴ In Ceylon the people attend divine service twice a week, on Wednesdays and Saturdays; besides which, there are in each month four days devoted to

¹ Rel. of Jews, p. 1-8.

² Sale, prel. discourse, pp. 76, 77.

³ H. I., b. v. ch. 14.

⁴ W. W., vol. ii. p. 199.

religious acts—the 8th, 15th, 23d, and 30th.¹ The Jewish ritual differs on the Sabbath-day from that used on week-days ; and such is the solemnity attached to this festival, that a quasi-personality is attributed to the day itself, which is exalted in the service for Friday evening as the bride of God, and which the congregation is invited to go in quest of, and to meet.² A similar sanctity is considered by many Christians to pertain to the Sunday, while all of them observe it as an important festival, and mark it by peculiar rites. Friday, too, is regarded by the majority of Christians as a day to be observed with distinctive rites, of which fasting is the principal.

When the interval observed between the performance of certain rites exceeds some very short period—as a day or week—it is generally a year. In this case, the time, whether it be a month, a week, a few days, or any other period, set apart for their performance assumes the character of a Festival. Under the general term Festival I include any annually recurrent season, whether it be one of mourning or rejoicing, of fasting or feasting, which is consecrated by the observance of special ceremonies of a religious order. In all religions above the lowest stage such festivals occur. The time of their occurrence is generally marked out by the seasons of the year. Mid-winter, or the season of sowing ; spring, or the time when the seed is in the ground or beginning to spring up ; and autumn, when the harvest has been gathered in,—are the most natural seasons for festivals ; and it is at these that they usually take place. For instance, Oldendorp states that nearly all the Guinea nations have an

¹ A. I. C., pp. 222, 223 ; H. R. C., p. 76. ² Rel. of Jews, p. 128.

annual harvest-festival, at which solemn thank-offerings are presented to the gods.¹ In China, this reference to the seasons is obvious. "At every new moon, and the change of the season, there are festivals." Of these, "the most imposing" is "the emperor's ploughing the sacred field. This takes place when the sun enters the fifteenth degree of Aquarius." But the precise day is determined by astrologers. This is the winter festival, or that of sowing. The "Leih-chun, at the commencement of the spring, continues for ten days." And in autumn the feast of harvest is celebrated with great merriment.² The Parsees have numerous festivals, which it would be tedious to enumerate in detail.³ After the Gahanbars, which refer to creation, the two principal ones are the No rouz and the Meherdjan, and of these Anquetil du Perron expressly states that the first originally corresponded to spring, and the second to autumn.⁴ Of the Hindu festivals described by Wilson, by far the greatest are the Pongol, at the beginning of the year, and the Holi, in the middle of March.⁵ Compared with these, the rest are insignificant; and these plainly refer to the processes of nature. That the great festivals of the Jews had the same reference, needs no proof; for the pass-over took place in spring, and the feast of Pentecost, as well as the feast of tabernacles, after harvest. Our Christmas and Easter correspond to the Pongol and Holi of the Hindus in point of time; and even the observances usual at Christmas have, as Wilson has pointed out, much resemblance to those of the Pongol.

¹ G. d. M., p. 332.

³ Z. A., vol. ii. p. 574-581.

² C. O., vol. ii. p. 195-199.

⁴ Ibid., vol. ii. p. 603.

⁵ W. W., vol. ii. p. 151.

There are in Ceylon five annual festivals, of which one, occurring at the commencement of the year (in April), is marked by the singular circumstance that "before New Year's day every individual procures from an astrologer a writing, fixing the fortunate hours of the approaching year on which to commence duties or ceremonies." Of the five festivals the most important was the Peraherra, which lasted from the new moon to the full moon in July, and consisted mainly in a series of religious processions, concluding with one in which the casket containing the Dalada, or tooth of Buddha, was borne upon an elephant. The fifth festival, called that of "New Rice," was held at the commencement of the great harvest, and was the occasion of offerings made with a view to good crops.¹

The consecrated actions by which men seek to commend themselves to their gods at these special seasons are very various. It would be useless to attempt to enumerate them at length. Of the manner in which New Year's day is observed among the Chinese,² the commencement of the year among Hindus,³ and Christmas among ourselves, it will be unnecessary to speak at all, for there is little of a religious character in these festivals. Indeed, New Year's day in China seems to be a merely secular festival; while the Christmas season in European countries, though varnished over with a religious gloss, is in reality palpably one of popular rejoicing, handed down from our pagan ancestors, and placed in a legendary relation to the birth of Christ. The reli-

¹ E. Y., vol. i. p. 314-318.

² C. O., vol. ii. pp. 194, 195.

³ W. W., vol. ii. p. 158 ff.

gious rites which may accompany this festival have therefore a secondary importance. Those observed at other times bear reference either to the frame of mind induced by the season, or to the particular legend commemorated; or they may be purely arbitrary and enjoined by ecclesiastical authority. An example of the first kind is the Jewish feast of tabernacles, when the harvest had been gathered in, and the Jews were enjoined to carry boughs of trees and rejoice seven days.¹ Examples of the second class are common. Legends are frequently related in order to account for festivals, while sometimes festivals may be instituted in consequence of a legend. Thus, the extraordinary story of the manifestation of Siva as an interminable Linga, is told by the Hindus to account for their worship of that organ on the 27th February.² In this case, the rites have reference to the legend; the setting up a Linga in their houses, consecrating, and offering to it, are ceremonies which refer to the event present in the minds of the worshippers; but it is more natural to suppose that the existence of the rites led to the invention of the legend, than that the legend induced the establishment of the rites. "The three essential observances," says Wilson, "are fasting during the whole Tithi, or lunar day, and holding a vigil and worshipping the Linga during the night; but the ritual is loaded with a vast number of directions, not only for the presentation of offerings of various kinds to the Linga, but for gesticulations to be employed, and prayers to be addressed to various subordinate divinities connected with Siva, and to Siva himself in a variety of forms."³ At another of the Hindu

¹ Lev. xxiii. 40. ² W. W., vol. ii. p. 211. ³ Ibid., vol. ii. p. 212.

festivals, the effigy of Kama is burnt, to commemorate the fact of that god having been reduced to ashes by flames from Siva, and having been subsequently restored to life at the intercession of Siva's bride.¹ In like manner the jesting of the Greek woman at the Thesmophoria was explained by reference to the laughter of Demeter.² The Jewish passover was eaten with rites which were symbolical of the state of the nation just before its escape from Egypt, the time to which their tradition assigned the original passover; and the ritual in use among Christians at Easter bears reference to the story of Christ's resurrection, which in this case no doubt preceded the institution of the festival. The third class of rites—those which are purely arbitrary or have a merely theological significance—are the most usual of all. These, as will be obvious at once, may vary indefinitely. Fasting is one of the most usual of such observances. It is practised by the Hindus at many of their festivals, by Mussulmans during the month of Ramadan, and by Christians in Lent. Bathing is also a common religious practice of the Hindus at their festivals. The use of holy water by Catholics on entering their churches is a ceremony of a similar kind, and no doubt having the same intention, that of purification. The Jews were to sacrifice at all their festivals, and on one of them to afflict their souls.³ Christians, among whom there are very numerous festivals, vary their ritual according to the character of the day.

One or two specimens of the rites observed on festival days will suffice as an illustration. The Peru-

¹ W. W., vol. ii. p. 231. ² Bib., i. 5. 1. ³ Lev. xxiii. 27.

vians, in their pagan days, used to have festivals every month : the greatest of these was that of the Trinity, celebrated in December. “ In this feast,” says Acosta, “ they sacrificed a great number of sheep and lambs, and they burnt them with worked and odoriferous wood ; and some sheep carried gold and silver, and they placed on them the three statues of the Sun, and the three of Thunder ; father, brother, and son, whom they said that the Sun and Thunder had. In this feast they dedicated the Inca children, and placed the Guacas, or ensigns on them, and the old men whipped them with slings, and anointed their faces with blood, all in token that they should be loyal knights of the Inca. No stranger might remain during this month and feast at Cuzco, and at the end all those from without entered ; and they gave them those pieces of maize with the blood of the sacrifice, which they eat, in token of confederation with the Inca.”¹ Equally curious are the rites prescribed by the Catholic Church for Holy Saturday. They are much too long to be described in full, but the following extract will convey a notion of their character : “ At a proper hour, the altars are covered over, and the hours are said, the candles being extinguished on the altar until the beginning of mass. In the meanwhile, fire is struck from a stone at the church-door, and coals kindled with it. The none being said, the priest, putting on his amice, alb, girdle, stole, and violet pluvial, or without his capsula, the attendants standing by him with the cross, with the blessed water and incense, before the gate of the church, if convenient, or in the porch of the church, he blesses the new fire, saying,

¹ H. I., b. 5. ch. 27.

The Lord be with you ; and the attendants reply, And with thy spirit." Prayers follow. "Then he blesses five grains of incense to be placed on the wax, saying his prayer." After the prayer, incense is put in the censer, and sprinkled with water. "Meanwhile, all the lights of the church are extinguished, that they may be afterwards kindled from the blessed fire." The candles are lighted with many ceremonies. The incense having been previously blessed, "the deacon fixes five grains of the blessed incense on the wax in the form of a cross." This wax is then lighted. When "the blessing of the wax taper" is finished, the prophets are read, and the catechumens during the reading are prepared for baptism.¹ These proceedings, in which the notion of the sanctity of fire—a notion shared by Roman Catholics with Parsees and others—is apparent, are particularly interesting, as showing the community of sentiment and of rites between the Church of Rome and her pagan predecessors.

In the instances hitherto given, the consecrated actions have been performed by the whole body of believers for the benefit of all. They are means by which their religious union among each other is strengthened, as well as their relation to the deity they worship solemnly expressed. But there is another class of consecrated actions which benefit, not the congregation or sect at large, but a particular individual for whose advantage they are performed. There are certain moments in the life of the individual at which he seems peculiarly to need the protec-

¹ Lewis, *The Bible, &c.*, p. 496. For a full account of the ceremonies on Holy Saturday at Rome, see C. M. Baggs, D.D., *The Ceremonies of Holy Week*, p. 96.

tion of God. Were these moments suffered to pass unobserved in a single case, it would appear as if he whose life had been thus untouched by religion stood outside the pale of the common faith, unhallowed and unblessed. And a total neglect of all these periods, even among savages, is, if not altogether unknown, at least so rare as to demand no special notice in a general analysis of religious systems. With extraordinary unanimity, those systems have pitched upon four epochs as demanding consecration by the observance of special rites. Two of them are thus consecrated wherever a definite religion exists at all. The other two are generally consecrated, though in their case exceptions more frequently occur. The four moments, or periods of life to which I refer, are

1. Birth.
2. Puberty.
3. Matrimony.
4. Death.

Of these, the first and fourth are never suffered to pass without religious observances, or at least, observances which, by their solemnity and indispensable obligation, approach to a religious character. The second is usually marked by some kind of rite in the case of males; in that of females it is often suffered to pass unobserved. The third is always placed under a religious sanction, except among savages of a very low order.

Let us proceed to illustrate these propositions in the case of birth. The ceremonies attendant upon this event need not take place immediately after it; they may be deferred some days, weeks, or months;

they will still fall under the same category, as designed to mark the child's entry into the world. Their form will naturally vary according to the state of civilisation of the nation observing them; but notwithstanding this there is a strange similarity among them. In Samoa, for instance, "if the little stranger was a boy, the umbilicus was cut on a club, that he might grow up to be brave in war. If of the other sex, it was done on the board on which they beat out the bark of which they make their native cloth. Cloth-making is the work of women; and their wish was, that the little girl should grow up and prove useful to the family in her proper occupation."¹ I have added Mr Turner's observation to render the nature of this ceremony plainer. It appears hardly religious; yet when we consider the symbolical means by which the end is sought to be attained, and that among savages so rude as those of Polynesia religion would have no higher practical aims than to make the boys good warriors, and the women industrious cloth-makers, we may admit that even this elementary rite has in it something of a religious consecration. When secular objects are attained by mystical ceremonies, which have no direct tendency to produce the desired result, we may generally conclude that religious belief is at the bottom of them. In the present instance this conclusion is still further strengthened by the description given by the same author of a similar ceremony in another island of the Polynesian group. There, when a boy is born, "a priest cuts the umbilicus on a particular stone from Lifu, that the youth may be stone-

¹ N. Y., p. 175.

hearted in battle. The priest, too, at the moment of the operation, must have a vessel of water before him, dyed black as ink, that the boy, when he grows up, may be courageous to go anywhere to battle on a pitch-dark night, and thus, from his very birth, the little fellow is consecrated to war."¹ Here the religious nature of the operation is explicitly proved by the presence of the priest, the inevitable agent in such communications between God and man. Another missionary to the same race—the Polynesian islanders—informs us that among these people mothers dedicated their offspring to various deities, but principally to Hiro, the god of thieves, and Oro, the god of war. “Most parents, however, were anxious that their children should become brave and renowned warriors,” and with this end they dedicated them, by means of ceremonies beginning before parturition, and ending after it, to the god Oro. The principal ceremony after birth consisted in the priest catching the spirit of the god, by a peculiar process, and imparting it to the child. Here again the presence of the priest, and the formal dedication to a god—even though he be a god of questionable morality—render the religious element in the natal ceremonies of these very primitive savages abundantly plain.²

Baptism, or washing at birth, is a common process, and is found in countries the most widely separated on the surface of the earth, and the most unconnected in religious genealogy. Asia, America, and Europe alike present us with examples of this rite. It seems to be a rude form of it which pre-

¹ N. Y., pp. 423, 424.

² N. M. E., p. 543.

vails in Fantee in Africa, where the father, on the eighth day after birth, after thanking the gods for the birth of his child, squirts some ardent spirits upon him from his mouth, and then pronounces his name, at the same time praying for his future welfare, and "that he may live to be old, and become a stay and support to his family," and if his namesake be living, that he may prove worthy of the name he has received.¹ A rite of baptism at birth, says Brinton, "was of immemorial antiquity among the Cherokees, Aztecs, Mayas, and Peruvians," and this rite was "connected with the imposing of a name, done avowedly for the purpose of freeing from inherent sin, believed to produce a spiritual regeneration, nay, in more than one instance, called by an indigenous word signifying 'to be born again.'"² Mexico possessed elaborate rites to consecrate nativity. When the Mexican infant was four days old it was carried naked by the midwife into the court of the mother's house. Here it was bathed in a vessel prepared for the purpose, and three boys, who were engaged in eating a special food, were desired by the midwife to pronounce its name aloud, this name being prescribed to them by her. The infant, if a boy, carried with it the symbol of its father's profession; if a girl, a spinning-wheel and distaff, with a small basket and a handful of brooms, to indicate its future occupation. The umbilical cord was then offered with the symbols; and in case of a male infant, these objects were buried in the place where war was likely to occur; in case of a female infant, beneath the stone where meal was ground.³ The

¹ Asha., p. 226.

² M. N. W., p. 128.

³ A. M., vol. v. p. 90 (Spanish), and vol. vi. p. 45 (English).

above statements rest on the authority of Mendoza's collection. A still more complete narrative of these baptismal ceremonies is given by Bernardino de Sahagun, who records the terms of the prayers habitually employed by the officiating midwife. Their extreme interest to the study of comparative religion will justify me in extracting some of them, the more so as they have never (so far as I am aware) been published in English.¹

Suppose that the infant to be baptized was a boy. After the symbolical military apparatus had been prepared, and all its relatives assembled in the court of the parents' house, the midwife placed it with the head to the east, and prayed for a blessing from the god Quetzalcoatl and the goddess of the water, Chalchivitlycue. She then gave it water to taste by moistening the fingers, and spoke as follows: "Take, receive; thou seest here that with which thou hast to live on earth, that thou mayest grow and flourish: this it is to which we owe the necessities of life, that we may live on earth: receive it." Hereupon, having touched its breast with the fingers dipped in water, she continued: "Omictomx! O my child! receive the water of the Lord of the world, which is our life, and by which our body grows and flourishes: it is to wash and to purify; may this sky-blue and light-blue water enter thy body and there live. May it destroy and separate from thee all the evil that was beginning in thee before the beginning of the world, since all of us men are subject to its power, for our mother is Chalchivitlycue." After this she washed

¹ Brinton has given a very imperfect version of two of them in his *M. N. W.*, pp. 127, 128.

the child's whole body with water, and proceeded to request all things that might injure him to depart from him, "that now he may live again, and be born again : now a second time he is purified and cleansed, and a second time our mother Chalchivitlycue forms and begets him." Then lifting the child in both hands towards the sky, she said : " O Lord, thou seest here thy child whom thou hast sent to this world of pain, affliction, and penitence : give him, O Lord, thy gifts and thy inspiration, for thou art the great God, and great is the goddess also." After this she deposited the infant on the ground, and then raising it a second time towards the sky, implored the "mother of heaven" to endow it with her virtue. Next, having again laid it down, and a third time lifted it up, she offered this prayer : " O Lords, the gods of heaven ! here is this child ; be pleased to inspire him with your grace and your spirit, that he may live on earth." After a final depositing she raised him a fourth time towards the sky, and in a prayer, addressed to the sun, solemnly placed him under the protection of that deity. Taking the weapons she proceeded further to implore the sun on his behalf for military virtues : " Grant him the gift that thou art wont to give thy soldiers, that he may go full of joy to thy house, where valiant soldiers who die in war rest and are happy." While all this was going on, a large torch of candlewood was kept burning ; and on conclusion of the prayers the midwife gave the infant some ancestral name. Let it be Yautl (which means *valiant man*) : then she addressed him thus : " Yautl ! take thou the shield ! take the dart ! for those are thy recreation, and the joys of the sun." The completion of the religious

office was signalled by the youths of the village coming in a body to the house and seizing the food prepared for them, which they called "the child's umbilicus." As they went along with this food they shouted out a sort of military exhortation to the newborn boy, and called upon the soldiers to come and eat the (so-called) umbilicus. All being over, the infant was carried back to the house, preceded by the blazing torch. Much the same was the process of baptizing a girl, except that the clothes and implements were suited to her sex. In her case, certain formularies were muttered by the midwife during the washing, in a low, inaudible tone, to the several parts of her body : thus she charged the hands not to steal, the secret parts not to be carnal, and so forth with each member as she washed it. Moreover, a prayer to the cradle, which seems in a manner to personify the universal mother earth, was introduced in the baptism of females.¹

If from heathen America we turn to Asia, we find that in the vast domain of the Buddhist faith the birth of children is regularly the occasion of a ceremony at which the priest is present,² and that in Mongolia and Thibet this ceremony assumes the special form of baptism. Candles burn, and incense is offered on the domestic altar ; the priest reads the prescribed prayers, dips the child three times, and imposes on it a name.³ A species of baptism prevails also among the Parsees, and was even enjoined by the Parsee Leviticus, the Vendidad. This very ancient code required that the child's hands should be washed

¹ C. N. E., b. 6, chs. 37, 38.

² R. B., vol. i. p. 584.

³ Ibid., vol. ii. p. 320.

first, and then its whole body.¹ The modern practice goes further. Before putting it to the breast, the Parsee mother sends to a Mobed (or priest), to obtain some Haoma juice; she steeps some cotton in it, and presses this into the child's mouth. After this, it must be washed three times in cow's urine, and once in water, the reason assigned being that it is impure. If the washing be omitted, it is the parents, not the child, who bear the sin.²

Slightly different in form, but altogether similar in essence, is the rite administered by the Christian Church to its new-born members. Like those which have been just described, it consists in baptism; but it offers a more remarkable instance than any of them of the tenacity with which the human mind, under the influence of religious belief, insists upon the performance of some kind of ceremony immediately after, or, at the most, at no great interval after birth. Christian baptism was not originally intended to be administered to unconscious infants, but to persons in full possession of their faculties, and responsible for their actions. Moreover, it was performed, as is well known, not by merely sprinkling the forehead, but by causing the candidate to descend naked into the water, the priest joining him there, and pouring the water over his head. The catechumen could not receive baptism until after he understood something of the nature of the faith he was embracing, and was prepared to assume its obligations. A rite more totally unfitted for administration to infants could hardly have been found. Yet such was the need that was

¹ *Av.*, vol. ii. p. xix.—*Vendidad*, xvi. 18–20.

² *Z. A.*, vol. ii. p. 551.

felt for a solemn recognition by religion of the entrance of the child into the world, that this rite, in course of time, completely lost its original nature. Infancy took the place of maturity ; sprinkling of immersion. But while the age and manner of baptism were altered, the ritual remained under the influence of the primitive idea with which it had been instituted. The obligations could no longer be undertaken by the persons baptized ; hence they must be undertaken for them. Thus was the Christian Church landed in the absurdity—unparalleled, I believe, in any other natal ceremony—of requiring the most solemn promises to be made, not by those who were thereafter to fulfil them, but by others in their name ; these others having no power to enforce their fulfilment, and neither those actually assuming the engagement, nor those on whose behalf it was assumed, being morally responsible in case it should be broken. Yet this strange incongruity was forced upon the Church by an imperious want of human nature itself ; and the insignificant sects who have adopted the baptism of adults have failed, in their zeal for historical consistency, to recognise a sentiment whose roots lie far deeper than the chronological foundation of Christian rites, and stretch far wider than the geographical boundaries of the Christian faith.

The intention of all these forms of baptism—that of Ashantee perhaps excepted—is identical. Water, as the natural means of physical cleansing, is the universal symbol of spiritual purification. Hence immersion, or washing, or sprinkling, implies the deliverance of the infant from the stain of original sin. The Mexican and Christian rituals are perfectly

clear on this head. In both, the avowed intention is to wash away the sinful nature common to humanity; in both the infant is declared to be born again by the agency of water.

Another ceremony very frequently practised at the birth of children is circumcision. The widespread existence of this rite is one of the most remarkable facts in comparative religious history. We know from Herodotos, that it was practised by the Colchians, Egyptians, Ethiopians, and Phœnicians.¹ It has been found in modern times, not only in many parts of Africa—to which it may have come from Egypt—but in the South Sea Islands and on the American continent. Thus, according to Beecham, there are “some people,” among the Gold Coast Africans, who circumcise their children,² though what proportion these circumcisers bear to the rest of the population, he does not inform us. Another traveller describes the mode of circumcising infants in the Negro kingdom of Fida or Juda, a country to which he believes that Islamism has not penetrated.³ The operation is very simple, and appears to be done without any religious ceremony; but the natives, when pressed as to the reason of the custom, can only reply that their ancestors observed it—an answer which would properly apply to a rite of religious origin whose meaning has been forgotten. Acosta, in his account of Mexican baptism, adds that a ceremony, which in some sort imitated the circumcision of the Jews, was occasionally performed by the Mexicans in their baptism, principally on the children of kings and noblemen. It consisted in

¹ Herod., ii. 104.

² Asha., p. 225.

³ V. G., vol. ii. p. 159.

cutting the ears and private members of male infants.¹ That the Jews circumcise their male children on the eighth day I need not state. The rite is performed with much solemnity, and is connected, as is common in these ceremonies, with the bestowal of a name on the child, the name being given by the father after the operation is over. Although circumcision is a ceremony which usually applies only to boys, and although it sometimes happens that the birth of girls is not marked like that of boys by any religious rite, yet the Jews do not omit to consecrate their female children as well as those of the stronger sex, though with less solemnity. "The first Saturday after the end of the month" of the mother's lying-in, she goes to the synagogue with her friends, where "the father of the girl is called up to the law on the altar, and there after a chapter hath been read to him as usual on the Sabbath morning, he orders the reader to say a Mee-Shabeyrach," or a prayer for a blessing.²

It is unnecessary, after these instances, to describe the various modes of consecrating the commencement of life which are in use in other countries. Enough has been said to show how general, if not how universal, such consecrating usages are; how religion, supported by the sentiment of mankind, seizes upon the life of the individual from the first moments of his existence; and demands, as one of the very earliest actions to be performed on his behalf, a solemn recognition of the fact that he stands under the influence, and needs the protection, of an invisible and super-human power.

After birth, the next marked epoch in life is the

¹ H. I., b. 5, ch. 26 (No. 2).

² Rel. of Jews, p. 27 (1st part).

arrival at manhood or at womanhood. The transition from infancy to maturity, from dependence on others to self-dependence, from an unsexual to a sexual physical and mental condition, has, like the actual entrance upon life and departure from it, been appropriated by religion with a view to its consecration by fitting rites. Since there is no precise time at which the boy can be said to become a youth, or the girl a maiden, the age at which the ceremonies attending puberty are performed varies very considerably in different countries. The range of variation is from eight to sixteen, though there are exceptional cases both of earlier and later initiation into the new stage of existence. Generally speaking, however, these ages are the limits within which the religious solemnities of puberty are confined.

More clearly, perhaps, than any of those occurring at the other crises of our lives, these solemnities are pervaded by common characteristics. Primitive man in Australia, in America, and in Africa, marks the advent of puberty in a manner which is essentially the same. When we rise to the higher class of religions, we find ceremonies of a different kind from which the ruder symbolism of the savage creeds is absent. But from the uniformity of the types of initiation into manhood among uncivilised people, it is highly probable that the progenitors of the Aryan and Semitic races also, at some period of their history, employed similar methods of rendering this epoch in life impressive and remarkable. Two distinguishing features characterise the rites of puberty—cruelty and mystery. There is always some painful ordeal to be undergone by the young men or boys who have

attained the requisite age; and this ordeal is to be passed through in extreme secrecy as regards the opposite sex, and with a ceremonial of an unknown character, which is hidden from all but the initiated performers. Sometimes the puberty of women is also sanctified by religious ceremonies, and these follow the same rules, except that the female sex are not required to undergo such severe suffering as is often inflicted upon men. While, however, the cruelty is less, the mystery is the same. Men are not admitted to witness the performances gone through, and these are conducted in secluded places to which no access is allowed.

The meaning of these two features of the rites of puberty is not difficult to divine. Young men enter at that age on a period of their lives in which they are expected to display courage in danger and firmness under pain. Hence the infliction of some kind of suffering is an appropriate symbolical preparation for their future careers. Moreover, the manner in which they endure their agony serves as a test of their fortitude, and may influence the position to be assigned to them in the warlike expeditions of the tribe. But the primary motive, no doubt, is the apparent fitness of the infliction of pain at an age when the necessary pains of manhood are about to begin.

The explanation of the secrecy observed is equally simple. A mysterious change takes place in the physical condition at puberty, the generative functions, which are to play so large a part in the life of the individual, making their appearance then. It is this natural process to which the religious process bears

reference. Without doubt the rites performed stand in symbolical relation to the new class of actions of which their subject is, or will be, capable. It is this allusion to the sexual instinct—a subject always tending to be shrouded in mystery—which is the origin of the jealous exclusion of women from the rites undergone by men, and of men from those undergone by women. The members of each sex are, so to speak, prepared alone for the pleasures they are afterwards to enjoy together. Religion, ever ready to seize on the more solemn moments of our existence, seeks to consecrate the time at which the two sexes are ready to enter towards one another on a new and deeply important relationship.

Bearing these characteristics in mind, we may proceed to notice a few of the ceremonies performed at puberty. Let us begin with the most barbarous of all, those witnessed by Mr Catlin among the Mandans, a tribe of North American Indians now happily extinct. The usual secrecy was observed about the “O-kee-pa,” as this great Mandan ceremony is termed, and it was only by a favour, never before accorded to a stranger, that Mr Catlin was enabled to be present in the “Medicine Lodge,” where the operations were conducted. In the first place a mysterious personage, supposed to represent a white man, appeared from the west and opened the lodge. At his approach all women and children were ordered to retire within their wigwams. Next day the young men who had arrived at maturity during the last year were summoned to come forth, the rest of the villagers remaining shut up. After committing the conduct of the ceremonies to a “medicine man,” this personage re-

turned to the west with the same mystery with which he had come. The young men were now kept without food, drink, or sleep, for four days and four nights. In the middle of the fourth day two men began to operate upon them, the one making incisions with a knife in their flesh, and the other passing splints through the wounds, from which the blood trickled over their naked, but painted bodies. The parts through which the knife was passed were on each arm, above and below the elbow; on each leg, above and below the knee; on each breast, and each shoulder. The young men not only did not wince, but smiled at their civilised observer during this process. "When these incisions were all made, and the splints passed through, a cord of raw hide was lowered down through the top of the wigwam, and fastened to the splints on the breasts or shoulder, by which the young man was to be raised up and suspended, by men placed on the top of the lodge for the purpose. These cords having been attached to the splints on the breast or the shoulders, each one had his shield hung to some one of the splints: his *medicine bag* was held in his left hand, and a dried buffalo skull was attached to the splint on each lower leg and each lower arm, that its weight might prevent him from struggling." At a signal, the men were drawn up three or four feet above the ground, and turned round with gradually increasing velocity, by a man with a pole, until they fainted. Although they had never groaned before, they uttered a heart-rending cry, a sort of prayer to the Great Spirit, during the turning. Having ceased to cry, they were let down apparently dead. Left entirely to themselves, they

in time were able "*partly* to rise," and no sooner could they do thus much than they moved to another part of the lodge, where the little finger of the left hand was cut off with a hatchet. But their tortures were not over. The rest of them took place in public, and were perhaps more frightful than any. The victims were taken out of the lodge, and, being each placed between two athletic men, were dragged along, the men holding them by thongs and running with them as fast as they could, until all the buffalo skulls and weights hanging to the splints were left behind. These weights must be dragged out through the flesh, the candidates having the option of running in the race described, or of wandering about the prairies without food until suppuration took place, and the weights came off by decay of the flesh. These horrors concluded, the young men were left alone to recover as best they might. Mr Catlin could only hear of one who had died "in the extreme part of this ceremony," and his fate was considered rather a happy one: "the Great Spirit had so willed it for some especial purpose, and no doubt for the young man's benefit."¹

Nor were the Mandans alone on the American continent in marking the entrance upon manhood by distinctive observances. On the contrary, a writer of the highest authority on Red Indian subjects, states that no young man among the native tribes was considered fit to begin the career of life until he had accomplished his great fast. Seven days were considered the maximum time during which a young man could fast, and the success of the devotee was

¹ O-kee-pa, p. 9-32.

inferred from the length of his abstinence. These fasts, says Mr Schoolcraft, "are awaited with interest, prepared for with solemnity, and endured with a self-devotion bordering on the heroic. . . . It is at this period that the young men and young women 'see visions and dream dreams,' and fortune or misfortune is predicted from the guardian spirit chosen during this, to them, religious ordeal. The hallucinations of the mind are taken for divine inspiration. The effect is deeply felt and strongly impressed on the mind ; too deeply, indeed, ever to be obliterated in after life." It appears that they always in after life trust to, and meditate on, the guardian spirit whom they have chosen at this critical moment ; but that "the *name* is never uttered, and every circumstance connected with its selection, and the devotion paid to it, are most studiously and professedly concealed, even from their nearest friends."¹ Mystery is certainly pushed to its highest point, when the name of the spirit chosen at puberty, and the very circumstances of the choice, are preserved as an inviolable secret within the breast of the devotee.

New South Wales is distinguished by a ceremony which, though far less severe than that of the Mandans, is nevertheless sufficiently painful. "Between the ages of eight and sixteen the males and females undergo the operation which they term Gna-noong ; viz., that of having the septum of the nose bored to receive a bone or reed. . . . Between the same years, also, the males receive the qualifications which are given to them by losing one front tooth." The loss of a tooth is not in itself a very serious

¹ A. R., vol. i. pp. 149, 150.

matter, but the intention of the extraction being religious, the natives contrive to get rid of it in the most barbarous mode. The final event is led up to by a series of performances of a more or less emblematic nature. One of them, for instance, is supposed to give power over the dog; another refers to the hunting of the kangaroo. There is the usual mystery about some part of the proceedings. When the boys were being arranged for the removal of the tooth "the author [Collins] was not permitted to witness this part of the business, about which they appeared to observe a greater degree of mystery and preparation than he had noticed in either of the preceding ceremonies." After this, some of the performers in the rite went through a number of extraordinary motions, and made strange noises. "A particular name, *boo-roo-moo-roong*, was given to this scene; but of its import very little could be learned. To the inquiries made respecting it no answer could be obtained, but that it was very good; that the boys would now become brave men; that they would see well and fight well." When the tooth was to be taken out, the gum was first prepared by a sharply-pointed bone; and a throwing-stick, cut for the purpose with "much ceremony," was then applied to the tooth, and knocked against it by means of a stone in the hand of the operator. The tooth was thus struck out of the gum, the operation taking ten minutes in the case of the first boy on whom the author witnessed this process being performed. After the tooth was gone, "the gum was closed by his friends, who now equipped him in the style that he was to appear in for some days. A girdle was tied round his waist,

in which was stuck a wooden sword; a ligature was bound round his head, in which were stuck slips of the grass-gum tree." The boy "was on no account to speak, and for that day he was not to eat." The sufferers in this ceremonial did not long remain quiescent. In the evening they had fresh duties to discharge. "Suddenly, on a signal being given, they all started up, and rushed into the town, driving before them men, women, and children, who were glad to get out of their way. They were now received into the class of men; were privileged to wield the sword and the club, and to oppose their persons in combat; and might now seize such females as they chose for wives." The sexual import of the ceremony is clearly brought into view by the last words of the writer. He adds that, having expressed a wish to possess some of the teeth, they were given him by two men with extreme secrecy, and injunctions not to betray them.¹

Another observer has described the same rite as performed in a somewhat different manner, "by the tribes of the Macquarrie district" farther north. When these tribes assemble "to celebrate the mysteries of Kebarrah," as it is termed, all hostility which may exist at the time is laid aside for the nonce. "When the cooi or cowack sounds the note of preparation, the women and children in haste make their way towards the ravines and gulleys, and there remain concealed." The dentistry of these tribes is less scientific than that of New South Wales. The tooth is knocked out "by boring a hole in a tree, and inserting into it a small hard twig; the tooth is

¹ N. S. W., p. 364-374.

then brought into contact with the end, and one individual holds the candidate's head in a firm position against it, whilst another, exerting all his strength, pushes the boy's head forwards; the concussion causes the tooth, with frequently a portion of the gum adhering to it, to fall out." But this is not all the poor boy has to endure, for while "some men stand over him, brandishing their waddies, menacing him with instant death if he utters any complaint," others cut his back in stripes, and make incisions on his shoulders with flints. It is an interesting part of these ceremonies, that the least groan or indication of pain is summarily punished by the utterance, on the part of the operators, of three yells to proclaim the fact, and by the transfer of the boy to the care of the women, who are summoned to receive him. If he does not shrink, "he is admitted to the rank of a huntsman and a warrior."¹

In other parts of Australia, different ceremonies prevail. Thus, in one of the districts visited by Mr Angas, when boys arrive at the age of fourteen or sixteen, they are "selected and caught by stealth," and the hairs of their body are plucked out, and green gum-bushes are placed "under the arm-pits and over the *os pubis*." Among the privileges conferred on those who have undergone this treatment, is that of wearing "two kangaroo teeth, and a bunch of emu feathers in their hair." More significant still is the permission to "possess themselves of wives," which the young men now obtain. The "scrub natives" vary the initiation again. Among them the boy, brought by an old man, is laid upon his back in the midst of five fires

¹ S. L. A., vol. ii. p. 216-224.

which are lighted around him. An instrument, called a *wittoo wittoo*, is whirled round over the fires, with the intention of keeping off evil spirits. Lastly, "with a sharp flint, the old man cuts off the foreskin, and places it on the third finger of the boy's left hand, who then gets up, and with another native, selected for the purpose, goes away into the hills to avoid the sight of women for some time. No women are allowed to be present at this rite."¹

Elsewhere on the same continent, there are three stages to be passed on the road from boyhood to manhood. "At the age of twelve or fifteen the boys are removed to a place apart from the women, whom they are not permitted to see, and then blindfolded. Among some other ceremonies their faces are blackened, and they are told to whisper, an injunction peculiarly characteristic of the mysteriousness which is so constant a feature of the rites of puberty. For several months this whispering continues, and it is noteworthy, as a sign of the sexual nature of these proceedings, that the place where the whisperers have been "is carefully avoided by the women and children." In the second ceremony, which occurs two or three years later, "the *glans penis* is slit open underneath, from the extremity to the scrotum, and circumcision is also performed." After this second stage, the *Part-napas*, as the youths are now styled, "are permitted to take a wife." In the third ceremony each man has a sponsor, by whom he is tattooed with a sharp quartz. These sponsors, moreover, bestow on each lad a new name, which he retains during the remainder of his life. Certain other performances are gone through, such as

¹ S. L. A., vol. i. pp. 98, 99.

putting an instrument termed a *witarna* round the lads' necks, and then "the ceremony concludes by the men all clustering round the initiated ones, enjoining them again to whisper for some months, and bestowing upon them their advice as regards hunting, fighting, and contempt of pain. All these ceremonies are carefully kept from the sight of the women and the children; who, when they hear the sound of the *witarna*, hide their heads and exhibit every outward sign of terror."¹

Leaving Australia, let us pass to Africa, and call Mr Reade as a witness to some of the rites of puberty existing among the savages of that Continent. The following extract is doubly interesting, as furnishing some account of the application to girls of the general principles involved in these rites, and also as supplying, in the author's opinion, that they are of a Phallic nature, a confirmation of the conclusions we had reached from a survey of the evidence as a whole:

"Before they are permitted to wear clothes, marry, and rank in society as men and women, the young have to be initiated into certain mysteries. I received some information upon this head from Mongilomba, after he had made me promise that I would not put it into a book; a promise which I am compelled to break by the stern duties of my vocation. He told me that he was taken into a fetich-house, stripped, severely flogged, and plastered with goat-dung; this ceremony, like those of Masonry, being conducted to the sound of music. Afterwards there came from behind a kind of screen or shrine uncouth and terrible sounds such as he had never heard before. These, he

¹ S. L. A., vol. i. p. 113-116.

was told, emanated from a spirit called *Ukuk*. He afterwards brought to me the instrument with which the fetich-man makes this noise. It is a kind of whistle made of hollowed mangrove wood, about two inches in length, and covered at one end with a scrap of bat's wing. For a period of five days after initiation the novice wears an apron of dry palm-leaves, which I have frequently seen.

"The initiation of the girls is performed by elderly females who call themselves *Ngembi*. They go into the forest, clear a place, sweep the ground carefully, come back to the town, and build a sacred hut which no male may enter. They return to the clearing in the forest, taking with them the *Igonji*, or novice. It is necessary that she should have never been to that place before, and that she fast during the whole of the ceremony, which lasts three days. All this time a fire is kept burning in the wood. From morning to night, and from night to morning, a *Ngembi* sits beside it and feeds it, singing, with a cracked voice, *The fire will never die out!* The third night is passed in the sacred hut; the *Igonji* is rubbed with black, red, and white paints, and as the men beat drums outside, she cries, *Okanda, yo! yo! yo!* which reminds one of the *Evohe!* of the ancient Bacchantes. The ceremonies which are performed in the hut and in the wood are kept secret from the men, and I can say but little of them. Mongilomba had evidently been playing the spy, but was very reserved upon the subject. Should it be known, he said, that he had told me what he had, the women would drag him into a fetich-house, and would flog him, perhaps till he was dead.

“It is pretty certain, however, that these rites, like those of the Bona Dea, are essentially of a Phallic nature; for Mongilomba once confessed, that having peeped through the chinks of the hut, he saw a ceremony like that which is described in Petronius Arbiter. . . .

“During the novitiate which succeeds initiation, the girls are taught religious dances—the men are instructed in the science of fetich.”¹

The Suzees and the Mandingoes, tribes of Western Africa, are distinguished by a rite which, so far as I know, is peculiar—the circumcision of women. Both sexes, indeed, are circumcised on reaching puberty, and in the case of the girls it is done “by cutting off the exterior part of the clitoris.” With a view to this ceremony, “the girls of each town who are judged marriageable are collected together, and in the night preceding the day on which the ceremony takes place, are conducted by the women of the village into the inmost recesses of a wood.” Surrounded by charms to guard every approach to the “consecrated spot,” they are kept here in entire seclusion for a month and a day, visited only by the old woman who performs the operation. During this close confinement they are instructed in the religion of their country, which hitherto they have not been thought fit to learn. A most singular scene is enacted at its close. They return to their homes by night; “where they are received by all the women of the village, young and old, quite naked.” In this condition they go about till morning, with music playing; and should any man be indiscreet

¹ S. A., p. 245-247.

enough to imitate Peeping Tom, he is punished by death or the forfeiture of a slave. After another month of parading and marching in procession (no longer nude) the women are given to their destined husbands;—another plain indication of the nature of these rites. In such veneration is this ceremony held among the women of the country, that those who have come from other parts, and are already in years, frequently submit to it to avoid the reproaches to which uncircumcision exposes them. Indeed, “the most vilifying term they can possibly use” is applied by the circumcised female population to those who do not enjoy their religious privileges.”¹

Puberty is recognised in much the same way among the South Sea Islanders. Thus, in Tanna “circumcision is regularly practised about the seventh year.”² In Samoa “a modified form of circumcision prevailed,” which boys, of their own accord, would get performed upon themselves about the eighth or tenth year.³ It may be a faint beginning of the religious ceremonies of this period of life that, in the same island, when girls are entering into womanhood, their parents invite all the unmarried women of the settlement to a feast, at which presents are distributed among them. At least it is worthy of remark that “none but females are present” on these occasions.⁴

When we rise higher in the scale of culture, we no longer find the painful rites by which savage nations mark the appearance of the sexual instinct. The sacred ceremony of investiture with the thread, which distinguished the twice-born classes among the Hindus, was performed at this age. The code of

¹ S. L., p. 70-73. ² N. Y., p. 87. ³ *Ib.*, p. 177. ⁴ *Ib.*, p. 184.

Manu is explicit on the subject "In the eighth year from the conception of a Brahman, in the eleventh from that of Kshatriya, and in the twelfth from that of a Vaisya, let the father invest the child with the mark of his class." In the case of children who desire to advance more rapidly than usual in their vocation, "the investiture may be made in the fifth, sixth, or eighth years respectively. The ceremony of investiture hallowed by the *gayatri* must not be delayed, in the case of a priest, beyond the sixteenth year; nor in that of a soldier beyond the twenty-second; nor in that of a merchant beyond the twenty-fourth." Further postponement would render those who were guilty of it outcasts, impure, and unfit to associate with Brahmans.¹

Members of the kindred Parsee religion become responsible human beings after they have been girt with the *kosti*, or sacred girdle. The age at which this took place was formerly fifteen; and after they had once put them on, the Parsees might not remove their girdles, except in bed, without incurring serious guilt. This regulation applied equally to both sexes. Modern usage has advanced the investiture with the *kosti* to a much earlier period. It takes place in India at seven, and in Kirman at nine. In India, the child is held responsible in the eighth or tenth year for one half of its sins, the parents bearing the burden of the other half.²

The young Jew "is looked upon as a man" at the age of thirteen, and is then bound "to observe all the commandments of the law." At this age he becomes "Bar-mizva," or a son of the law; that is,

¹ Manu, ii. 36-40.

² Av., vol. i. p. 9; vol. ii. pp. xxi., xxii.

he enters on his spiritual majority.¹ Christian nations signalise the advent of the corresponding epoch by admitting those who attain it to the Sacrament of the Lord's supper, and to confirmation. At puberty they are considered, like the young Parsees, responsible for the sins which at their birth their sponsors took upon themselves, and at puberty they are admitted, like the Jews, to the full privileges of their faith, by being allowed to partake in the mystic benefits conferred by the celebration of the death of Christ in the Holy Communion.

After puberty the two sexes enter on a new relation towards one another; and though the instinct by which this relation is established is extremely apt to break loose from the control of religion, yet the latter always attempts more or less energetically to bring it within its grasp. This it does by confining the irregular indulgences to which the sexual passion is prone within the legalised forms of matrimony. To matrimony, and matrimony alone, it gives its sanction; and accordingly it confers a peculiar sacredness upon this form of cohabitation, by the performance of ceremonies at its outset. Such ceremonies are not indeed equally universal with those of birth and puberty. Among savage and slightly civilised communities we do not find them. But in all the great religions of the world they are firmly established.

Little of a distinctively religious character is perceptible in Major Forbes's account of marriage rites in the island of Ceylon. Yet it is plain that Singhalese marriages do stand under a religious sanction, for in

¹ Picard, vol. i. ch. x. p. 82.

the first place an astrologer must examine the horoscopes of the two parties, to discover whether they correspond, and then the same functionary is called upon to name an auspicious time for the wedding. On the day of its occurrence a feast is given at the bride's house, and "on the astrologer notifying that the appointed moment is approaching, a half-ripe cocoa-nut, previously placed near the board with some mystical ceremonies, is cloven in two at one blow."¹

Turning from southern to northern Buddhism, we find Köppen asserting that in Thibet and the surrounding countries, marriage consists solely in the private contract, yet adding that none the less the lamaist clergy find business to do in regard to engagements and weddings. The priests alone know whether the nativity of the bride stands in a favourable relation to that of the bridegroom, and if not, by what ceremonies and sacrifices misfortune may be averted; they alone know the day that is most suitable and propitious for the wedding; they give the bond its consecration and its blessing by burning incense and by prayer.²

The Code of Manu is not very clear as to the sort of marriages sanctioned by religion; some irregular connections apparently receiving a formal recognition, though regarded with moral disapprobation. The system of caste, moreover, introduces a confusing element, since the nuptial rites are permitted, by some authorities, to become less and less solemn as the grade of the contracting parties becomes lower. This opinion having been mentioned, however, the legislator adds, that "in this Code, three of the five

¹ E. Y., vol. i. p. 326-332.

² R. B., vol. ii. p. 321.

last [forms of marriage] are held legal, and two illegal: the ceremonies of Pisachas and Asuras must never be performed." Of the two prohibited forms, the first is merely an embrace when the damsel is asleep, drunk, or of disordered intellect; the second is when the bride's family, and the bride herself, have been enriched by large gifts on the part of the bridegroom. Strangely enough, this regulation does not exclude the marriage called Gandharva, which is "the reciprocal connection of a youth and a damsel, with mutual desire," and is "contracted for the purpose of amorous embraces, and proceeding from sexual inclination." Nor does it forbid forcible capture. But a little further on, the Code encourages the more regular modes of marrying by promising intelligent, beautiful, and virtuous sons to those who observe them; and threatening those who do not with bad and cruel sons. It is then stated that "the ceremony of joining hands is appointed for those who marry women of their own class, but with women of a different class" certain ceremonies, enumerated in the Code, are to be performed.¹ It is probable that this Code was never actually the law of any part of India; but it is none the less interesting to see the legislator striving to bring the lawless passions with which he is dealing under the supervision of religion.

An elaborate blessing and exhortation, beginning with the words "In the name of God," is appointed in the Zend-Avesta for the nuptial ceremonial. While marriages among Jews and Christians are, as is well known, inaugurated by solemn religious

¹ *Manu*, iii. 1 44.

rites, and all unions not thus consecrated are, at least by the formal judgment of their respective creeds, pronounced unholy, sinful, and impure.

Death, like marriage, is held among all religions but the lowest to call for the performance of befitting rites. In these it is usually noticeable that much regard is paid to the manner in which the deceased is placed in the grave, this circumstance indicating as a general rule some form of the belief in his continued existence. Thus, Lieut.-Colonel Collins, describing the burial of a boy in New South Wales, observes that "on laying the body in the grave, great care was taken so to place it that the sun might look at it as it passed, the natives cutting down for that purpose every shrub that could obstruct the view. He was placed on his right side, with his head to the N.W."¹

If there is little trace among the rude population of this colony of a religious ceremony at the interment, we find the position of religion distinctly recognised by the natives of some parts of Africa. Oldendorp tells us of the tribes with which he was acquainted, that the funeral rites are performed by the priests, who are richly rewarded for the service. Not only are animals sacrificed at the graves, but in the case of men of rank their wives and servants are (as is well known) slaughtered to attend them.² In Sierra Leone, where "every town or village, which has been long inhabited, has a common burial-place," there is the usual attention to position in the grave. "The head of the corpse, if a man, lies either east or west; if a woman, it is turned either to the

¹ N. S. W., p. 387-390.

² G. d. M., p. 313-317.

north or south. An occasional prayer is pronounced over the grave, importing a wish that God may receive the deceased, and that no harm may happen to him." Moreover, there is a ceremony which appears to be a sort of sacrifice to the manes. "A fowl is fastened by the leg upon the grave, and a little rice placed near it; if it refuse to eat the rice, it is not killed; but if it eat, the head is cut off, and the blood sprinkled upon the grave; after which it is cooked, and a part placed on the grave, the remainder being eaten by the attendants." A tribe called the Soosoos "bury their dead with their faces to the west."¹

Sometimes we meet with the opinion that the entire removal of the deceased from his accustomed place of abode on earth depends upon due attention to the rites of interment. A primitive form of this widespread belief—which lingers as a survival even in Christendom—is observable in Polynesia. In Samoa, "in order to secure the admission of a departed spirit to future joys, the corpse was dressed in the best attire the relatives could provide, the head was wreathed with flowers, and other decorations were added. A pig was then baked whole, and placed upon the body of the deceased, surrounded by a pile of vegetable food." The corpse is then addressed by a near relation, who desires it with the property thus bestowed to make its way into "the palace of Tiki," and not to return to alarm the survivors. If nothing happened within a few days, the deceased was supposed to have got in; but a cricket

¹ S. L., vol. i. pp. 238, 239.

being heard on the premises was taken as an ill omen, and led to the repetition of the offering.

Elsewhere in the same group of islands "more costly sacrifices" were presented to the gods of the celestial regions. At least at the interment of a chief it was customary for his wives to sit down severally near his body, to be strangled, and then buried along with him. "The reasons assigned for this are, that the spirit of the chief may not be lonely in its passage to the invisible world, and that by such an offering its happiness may be at once secured."¹

Funeral ceremonies in Mexico were performed by priests and monks, and varied in splendour according to the rank of the deceased. Offices were chanted at the graves, and at the burial of persons of quality slaves were killed to serve them in the next world. Moreover, so sensible were the Mexicans to the importance of religion in all states of being, that even the domestic chaplain was not omitted; a priest being slaughtered to accompany his lord in that capacity.²

In Ceylon, a dying relative is taken to a detached apartment, where he is placed with his head towards the east. After death the body is turned with the head towards the west, and in the grave this position is preserved. Bodies of priests, and persons of the highest rank, are burned, and during the process of cremation the officiating priest "repeats certain forms of prayer." The same functionary returns to deliver "some moral admonitions" after seven days, when the friends revisit the pyre to collect the ashes.³

Notwithstanding the fact that in countries profess-

¹ N. M. E., pp. 145, 146. ² H. I., b. v. ch. viii. ³ E. Y., pp. 334, 335

ing the lamaistic form of Buddhism dead bodies are unceremoniously exposed to the open air, and left as a prey to birds or dogs, the mortality of the laity "forms, with their sicknesses, the richest source of income for the priests." A great deal, says the author from whom we draw this information, depends on the separation of soul and body taking place according to rule; and it is important that the spirit should not injure those who are left, and should meet with a happy re-birth. The Lama therefore attends the death-bed, takes care to place the deceased in the correct position, and observes the hour of departure. An operation is then performed on the skin of the head, which is supposed to liberate the soul. What rites are now to be performed, how the body is to be disposed of, towards what quarter it is to be turned, and various other details, depend on astrological combinations known only to the clergy. But their most important and profitable business is the repetition of masses for the dead, which are designed to pacify the avenging deities, and to help the soul towards as favourable a career as is possible for it. The length of time during which these masses are said varies with the wealth of the survivors; poor people obtaining them for a few days only; the richer classes for seven weeks; and princes being able to assist the spirits of their relations for a whole year.¹

Among the Parsees the cemeteries consist of desolate, open places, on which the corpses are deposited and left exposed to the air. These places are called Dakhmas, and are carefully consecrated by the

¹ R. B., vol. ii. p. 323-325.

priests with an elaborate ceremonial. The position of the dead in the Dakhmas is fixed by the religious law. Their dying moments and those that succeed upon death are watched over by the Parsee faith, which has determined the prayers to be repeated during the last hour of life; before the body is placed upon the bier; when it is carried out; on the way to the Dakhma, and at the Dakhma itself. The ceremonies required on these occasions must be performed by the Maubads, or priests. But the due disposal of the body by no means concludes the duties of relations towards the dead. The welfare of the soul also demands numerous prayers. Being supposed to linger for three days in the immediate neighbourhood of the corpse, it is the object during that time of especial attention, and the rites then performed may be of use to it in the judgment which takes place on the fourth day. Prayers are to be recited, and offerings made on the 30th and 31st day after death, and even then the ceremonies attending the close of mortal existence are not concluded, for it is necessary after the lapse of a year again to celebrate the memory of the departed. Moreover, the 26th chapter of the Yasna, a hymn of praise and blessing, is to be said every day during the year before eating.¹

Masses for the dead are no less common in Christian countries (save where the Protestant faith is professed), than among Buddhists and Parsees. Their object also is precisely the same; namely, the welfare of the soul which has quitted its earthly home to enter on a new form of being. And although no such prayers are repeated in Protestant communities, yet there can be

¹ Av. vol. ii. p. xxxii.-xlii.

no doubt that interment in due form, and with due solemnity, is held by the people, even in England, to benefit the soul in some undefined way. Nor is any portion of the ritual of the English Church more impressive than that passage in the Burial Service where the officiating priest consigns "earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust, in sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life, through our Lord Jesus Christ."

But it is not only the due performance of these last rites which popular opinion associates with the prospect of salvation in the world to come. As in other religions, so in that of our own country, the position of the body in the tomb is deemed to be of vast importance. The head must be westward and the feet eastward, the nominal reason being that the dead person should rise from his temporary abode with his face to the east, whence Christ will come; the real reason being in all probability the survival of a much older custom, in which that venerable divinity, the Sun, stood in the place of the Saviour of mankind.

CHAPTER II.

CONSECRATED PLACES.

CONSECRATED actions of various kinds being the primary method of approaching the beings in whose honour they are performed, there remain various secondary methods; sometimes tending to heighten the effect of the primary method, sometimes supplementing it. These secondary means of giving effect to the religious sentiment may be divided into three classes:—the consecration of places, of things, and of persons; while the last of these falls into two subdivisions: the self-dedication of certain individuals to their deity, and the dedication of a certain class to the more special performance of religious services on behalf of the community.

Consecration of places evidently confers on the actions performed within them a higher sanctity. Prayer offered in a place which has been devoted to the service of God is more likely to be successful. Praise from within its walls will be more acceptable. Wedlock contracted under its influence will be more solemn, and will possess a more binding character. Children may most fitly enter upon life by a profession of faith made in their behalf in a consecrated temple. And the bodies of the dead will rest more peacefully in consecrated earth.

It is scarcely needful to offer evidence of the fact that in various lands, and by many kinds of belief, the performance of certain ceremonies is held to consecrate places to the purpose of communication between man and the higher powers. From the savage in Sierra Leone, where "a small shed of dry leaves" presents perhaps the rudest form of temple to be found on earth,¹ to the European who worships his God in St Peter's or Westminster Abbey, the same opinion prevails. Everywhere the consecration of places is conceived to render them fitter for the celebration of religious rites, and unfit for all profaner uses.

Of the state of feeling with which such localities are endowed by the ordinary worshipper, an excellent example is offered in Solomon's speech at the dedication of the temple. He specially requests Jehovah that when prayers are made to him in this place, or toward this place, he will hear such prayers: that is, he expects that the sanctity he will confer upon the temple, by devoting it to Jehovah, will add something to the efficacy of petitions in which it is in some way concerned. The manner in which he dedicates the temple may serve, too, as a type of this kind of ceremony. "Solomon," we are told, "offered a sacrifice of peace-offerings, which he offered unto the Lord, two-and-twenty thousand oxen, and an hundred and twenty thousand sheep." With this barbaric magnificence he "dedicated the house of the Lord," and he subsequently hallowed the middle of the court by "burnt-offerings, and meat-offerings, and the fat of the peace-offerings."² How great was the respect attached to this temple by the Israelites, and how anxiously they sought to

¹ S. L., p. 65.

² 1 Kings viii.

guard it against such profanation as it received at the hands of Pompey, is well known.

The lavish splendour with which Solomon adorned his temple is a common feature of consecrated places. Like the ancient Hebrews, the Mexicans and Peruvians had buildings in honour of their gods, of extreme magnificence. The temple of Pachacamac, or the Creator, in Peru, was a very large and ancient building, richly decorated, which was found to contain an immense wealth of gold and silver vessels.¹ The boundless munificence with which pious Christians have sought to beautify their places of worship needs no description. Along with the more formal consecration given to such sanctuaries of the Most High by special rites, they have sought to render them more worthy of his habitation by the liberality displayed in their erection and embellishment.

¹ H. I., b. v., ch. iii., xii.

CHAPTER III.

CONSECRATED OBJECTS.

BESIDES consecration of places to religious uses, material things may be consecrated to the deity worshipped by those who thus apply them. These things may be of the most varied description, from common objects of the most trifling value, to those of the utmost possible estimation. Among consecrated objects are the furniture of temples or churches, which is reserved for divine service; the garments worn by priests in their liturgical functions; the votive tablets in which men record their gratitude for preservation in danger; pictures, statues, endowments of land for monasteries or the support of ecclesiastical offices; and anything else which the owners may part with from pious motives, and with the view of bestowing it entirely on their god or his vicegerents on earth.

Such consecrated objects were seen in abundance by Lieutenant Matthews in Sierra Leone, where the natives devoted them to the idols who reigned in the small sheds of dry leaves mentioned in the preceding chapter. The offerings made by the natives to these superhuman beings consisted of "bits of cloth, pieces of broken cups, plates, mugs, or glass bottles, brass rings, beads, and such articles." But a still more precious object was bestowed upon these gods by the people when they wished to render them particularly

complaisant. Then "they generally provide liquor," of which they make a very small libation to the object of their petitions, and drink the rest. Moreover, they have also little genii, or household gods, consisting of images of wood from eight to twelve inches long, to whom they consecrate certain things. These might be of a very miscellaneous order. There might be seen, for instance, "a brass pan fastened to the stump of a tree by driving a country axe through it—a glass bottle set up on the stump of a tree—a broken bottle placed upon the ground with two or three beads in it, covered with a bit of cloth, and surrounded with stones—a rag laid upon small sticks and covered with a broken calabash," and so forth. As in more civilised countries, the sanctity conferred upon these objects by religion places them under the special protection of the law. "To remove one of them even unknowingly," continues the author, "is a great offence, and subjects the aggressor to a *palaver*, or action in their courts of law."¹ The Tartar chiefs, as described by the traveller Carpin, kept idols in their places of abode, to whom they offered not only the first milk of their ewes and mares, and something of all they eat, but to whom they even consecrated horses. After this dedication to the idol no one might mount these horses.² Among the Singhalese a curious mode prevails of consecrating fruit to some demon, in order to prevent its being stolen. "A band of leaves" is to be seen fastened around the stem of a fruit-tree, and it is supposed that no thief will be so sacrilegious as to touch the fruit that has been thus hallowed. "Occasionally," says Sir Emerson Tennent, "these dedica-

¹ S. L., p. 65-67.

² Bergeron, Voyage de Carpin, p. 30.

tions are made to the temples of Buddha, and even to the Roman Catholic altars, as to that of St Anne of Calpentyn. This ceremony is called Gokbandeema, 'the tying of the tender leaf,' and its operation is to prevent the fruit from pillage, till ripe enough to be plucked and sent as an offering to the divinity to whom it has thus been consecrated." He adds, that a few only of the finest are offered, the rest being kept by the owner.¹ Another author, describing the same custom, says, "To prevent fruit being stolen, the people hang up certain grotesque figures around the orchards and dedicate it to the devils, after which none of the native Ceylonese will dare even to touch the fruit on any account. Even the owner will not venture to use it, till it be first liberated from the dedication. For this purpose, they carry some of it to the pagoda, where the priests, after receiving a certain proportion for themselves, remove the incantations with which it was dedicated."² Here the consecration, contrary to the usual rule, is made with an interested motive, and is of the nature of a direct bargain for temporal advantages. Of the common form of consecration among the same people, another visitor gives evidence; their temples are, he says, "adorned with such things as the people's ability and poverty can afford; accounting it the highest point of devotion, bountifully to dedicate such things unto their gods, which in their estimation are most precious."³

Sometimes consecration is held to confer special powers, not otherwise possessed, upon the objects on which it is performed. Thus, among the rude Mon-

¹ Ceylon, vol. i. p. 540 (3d ed.)

² A. I. C., p. 198.

³ H. R. C., p. 73.

golians, the consecrating rites to which sacred writings and images of Buddha are subjected are described by a word meaning *to animate*, which is held by a learned Orientalist to express their sense of the communication of living power, of which the religious ceremony is the vehicle.¹ Thus, too, among Christians, the consecration of bread and wine by a priest is regarded as the means of a still more extraordinary communication of living power to those lifeless elements. And the writer has been present at the Vatican when a vast number of rosaries, and other such trinkets, were held up by a crowd of devotees to receive the Papal blessing, which was evidently considered, by their owners, to confer upon them some kind of virtue that was otherwise lacking.

Naturally it follows from the theory of consecration—which is that of a gift from men to God—that the more valuable the objects given, the more pleasing will they be. Hence, men generally endeavour to consecrate valuable objects, though instances to the contrary may be found. The horses bestowed by the Tartars were, no doubt, among their most precious possessions. And the large endowments of land, devoted in perpetuity to the Church during the middle ages, were gifts of the most permanent and most coveted form of property.

Consecration differs from sacrifice, in that the objects of sacrifice are intended for the immediate gratification of the deity, those of consecration for his continued use. Hence, things sacrificed are consumed upon the spot; things consecrated are preserved as long as their nature permits of it. So strong is the

¹ G. O. M., p. 330.

sense of permanence attaching to consecration, that there are probably even now persons among us, who would regard it as a sort of crime for the State to assume the ownership of lands once devoted to religious purposes, or to divert the proceeds to some other employment. A like sentiment, no doubt, prevails with regard to the material and the furniture of places of worship. With regard to sacrifice the case is different. Animals, fruits, or other articles intended for sacrifice, are given to the god or his representative for the single occasion, and as a requisite in the performance of some momentary rite. If a homely comparison may be permitted on so sacred a subject, it might be not inaptly said, that things sacrificed are like the meat and drink placed before a guest who is invited to dinner, while things consecrated rather resemble the present which he carries away to his own residence, and keeps for the remainder of his life.

CHAPTER IV.

CONSECRATED PERSONS.

WE have seen the religious instinct leading to the consecration of actions, to the consecration of places, and to the consecration of things. We are now to follow it in a yet more striking exhibition of its power, the consecration by human beings of their own lives and their own persons (or sometimes of the lives and persons of their children). Not only is such self-dedication to the service of religion common; it is well-nigh universal. There is no phenomenon more constant, none more uniform, than this. Differing in minor details, the grand features of self-consecration are everywhere the same, whether we look to the saintly Rishis of ancient India; to the wearers of the yellow robe in China or Ceylon; to the Essenes among the Jews; to the devotees of Vitziliputzli in pagan Mexico; or to the monks and nuns of Christian times in Africa, in Asia, and in Europe. Throughout the various creeds of these distant lands there runs the same unconquerable impulse, producing the same remarkable effects. This is not the place to attempt a psychological explanation of asceticism as a tendency of human nature. We have now only to notice some of its most conspicuous manifestations, and thus to assign to it its proper

place in a history of the mode in which man endeavours to approach and to propitiate his god.

Generally speaking, we may premise that the consecration of individuals to a life in which religion is the predominating element, means the abandonment of the ordinary pleasures of the world. This is of the very essence of self-devotion. Sanctity, and the enjoyment of all those things in which the body is largely concerned, have always been regarded as inconsistent and opposite. Hence, in the first line of things prohibited to consecrated persons, we always discover the pleasures of sex. To indulge in these is usually considered the most flagrant outrage against their rules. Next to sexual delights, or equally with them, the luxuries of choice food, rich clothing, comfortable beds, well-furnished rooms, and similar ministrations to physical ease are withheld from the votaries. They are very frequently voluntary paupers or mendicants; or where this is not the case, they usually depend on some endowment derived from the liberality of others. Where their numbers are large, they are placed under rules, and bound to the strictest obedience to their superiors in the same line of life. Moreover, mere abstinence from ordinary pleasures is not enough to prove their devotion; they are called on to undergo extraordinary pains. These vary with the rule of the order, or their own fervour. Sometimes they are obliged to live in rooms which, in the coldest weather, no fire is permitted to cheer; sometimes their sleep is broken by rising at unseasonable hours to worship their deity; sometimes the garment they wear is too thick in summer, and too scanty in winter; and sometimes they tear their own flesh by

scourging and flagellation. Fasting, too, is often imposed at certain times. And the zeal of individuals always outruns the compulsory hardships of their position. They will show the intensity of their devotion by fasting more rigorously than others, sleeping on harder couches, bearing greater inflictions. Self-consecration continually tends towards greater and greater self-denial; but the actual degrees of self-denial vary from the mere observance of some simple rules to the extremest possibility of self-torture. Confining ourselves, however, to the general marks which characterise this devotion of persons to religion, we may say that it involves principally two things: chastity and poverty.

When the Spaniards had established themselves in Mexico and Peru, they were astonished to find, in the religious customs and practices of the new world they had invaded, so much that resembled those of the old world they had left behind. Especially was this the case with regard to monastic institutions, in respect of which it seemed that the Christian missionaries had little to teach their heathen brothers. "Certainly it is a matter of surprise," says the Reverend Father Acosta, "that false religious opinion should have so much power with those young men and young women of Mexico, that they should do with such austerity in the service of Satan that which many of us do not do in the service of the most high God. Which is a great confusion to those who are very proud and very well satisfied with some trifling penance which they perform."¹ In describing more particularly the manner in which the devil had contrived to be served in Mexico, he states that around

¹ II. I., b. 5, ch. 16, sub fine.

the great temple there were two monasteries, one of young women and the other of young men, whom they called monks (*religiosos*). Those young men who served in the temple of Vitziliputzli lived in poverty, chastity, and obedience; ministered like Levites to the priests and dignitaries of the temple, and had manual labour to do. Besides these were others who performed menial services, and carried the offerings that were made when their superiors went in quest of alms. All these had persons who took charge of them, and when they went abroad they held their heads low and their eyes on the ground, not daring to raise them to look at the women they might come across. Should they not receive enough by way of alms, they had the right of going to the sown fields, and plucking the ears of corn of which they had need. They practised penance, rising at midnight, and also cutting themselves so as to draw blood; but this exercise and penance did not last more than a year.¹

Both in Mexico and in Peru young girls were consecrated to a religious life, but this consecration was sometimes only temporary; a certain proportion of the Peruvian nuns being drafted off into the harem of the Inca. Acosta, describing this consecration of virgins, is again impressed with the abilities of the devil. Since, he observes, the religious life is so pleasing in the eyes of God, the father of lies has contrived, not only to imitate it, but to cause his ministers to be distinguished in austerity and regularity. Thus in Peru there were many convents for girls, who were placed under the tuition of old women whom

¹ H. I., b. 5, ch. 16.

they called Mamaconas. Indoctrinated by the Mamaconas in "various things necessary for human life, and in the rites and ceremonies of their gods," they were removed, after they had attained fourteen years, either to the sanctuaries where they preserved a perpetual virginity, or to be sacrificed in some religious ceremonial, or to become wives and mistresses of the Inca and his friends. The consecration of these damsels was not, as usual in such cases, voluntary on their part, but the same idea of merit inspired the gift on the part of those who made it. For, while the surrender of female children to the monastery was compulsory when demanded by an officer named the "Appopanaca," yet, "many offered their girls of their own free will, it appearing to them that they gained great merit, inasmuch as they were sacrificed for the Inca." If any of the older nuns, who presided over the children, had sinned against her honour, she was invariably buried alive or subjected to some other cruel death.

"In Mexico," continues the pious Jesuit, "the devil also found his own kind of nuns, although the profession did not last more than one year." As has been said, there were two houses, one for men and another for women. Like the monks, the nuns also wore a distinctive costume, and dressed their hair in a distinctive fashion. Like them, they had manual labour to perform; like them, they rose at midnight for matins. They had their abbesses, who occupied them in making robes for the adornment of the idols. They also had their penance, in which they cut themselves in the points of the ears. They lived with honour and circumspection, and any delinquency,

even the smallest, was punished with death ; for they said that the sinner had violated the honour of their god.¹

Another author, describing the religious orders of Peru, states that fathers, anxious that their children's lives should be preserved, used to dedicate them in infancy to some form of monastic establishment, to which they were actually committed at the age of fifteen. If, for instance, they were promised to the house of Calmecac, it was that they might perform penance, and serve the gods, and live in purity and humility and chastity, and be altogether preserved from carnal vices. A Christian parent could have desired no more. "And if it were a woman, she was a servant of the temple called Civatlamacazqui ; she had to be subject to the women who governed that order ; she had to live in chastity, and abstain from every carnal act, and to live with the virgins who were called *the sisters*," who were shut up in the convent. A feast was made when the child was dedicated by its parents, and the head of the order took it in his arms in token that it was his subject till it was married ; the consecration not being perpetual. Its reception was accompanied by a solemn ceremonial, in which the following prayer was offered to their god : "O Lord, most merciful, protector of all, here stand thy handmaidens, who bring thee a new handmaid, whose father and mother promise and offer her, that she may serve thee. And well thou knowest that the poor thing is thine : vouchsafe to receive her, that for a few days she may sweep and adorn thy house, which is a house of penance and weeping, where the daughters of the nobles place their

¹ II. I., b. 5, ch. 15.

hand on thy riches, praying and weeping to thee with tears and great devotion, and where they demand with prayers thy words and thy power. Vouchsafe, O Lord, to show her grace, and to receive her: place her, O Lord, in the company of the virgins who are called Tlamacazque, who do penance and serve in the temple, and wear their hair short. O Lord, most merciful, protector of all, vouchsafe to do with her whatever is thy holy will, showing her the grace which thou knowest to be suited to her." If then the girl was of age, she was marked in the ribs and breast, in evidence of her being a nun; and if she was still a child, a string of beads was put round her neck, which she wore until she could fulfil the vow of her parents.¹

But in addition to these temporary nuns, Peru had others, whose vows were perpetual. Vega relates in his Commentaries, that besides the women who entered into monasteries to profess perpetual virginity, there were many women of the blood-royal who lived in their own houses, subject to a vow of virginity, though not in "clausura." They went out to visit their relations on various occasions. They were held in the greatest respect for their chastity and purity, which was by no means feigned, but altogether genuine. Any failure to observe their vow was punished by burning or drowning. The writer knew one of these women when advanced in life, and occasionally saw her when she visited his mother, whose great-aunt she was. He bears witness himself to the profound veneration with which this old lady was everywhere received, the place of honour being always assigned to her, as well by his mother as by her other

¹ A. M., vol. v. p. 484-486.

acquaintances.¹ Thus we find celibacy, as a mark of piety, in full force in the new world at the time of its discovery, no less than in the old ; and religious chastity as much respected by the idolatrous Mexicans and Peruvians as by their Catholic invaders.

Monasticism, in countries where Buddhism reigns supreme, is a vast and powerful institution. In the early times of Buddhistic fervour, it would almost seem from the language of the legends, that to embrace the faith of Sakyamuni and to become an ascetic were one and the same thing. At least every convert who aspired to be not only a hearer, but a doer of the word, is described as instantly assuming the tonsure and the yellow robe. At the same time the distinction between Bhikshus, mendicants, and Upasakas, laymen, is no doubt an early one ; and we must assume, that as soon as the religion of the gentle ascetic began to spread among the people at large, those whose circumstances did not permit them to be monks or nuns were received on easier terms. "What," asked a disciple, "must be done in the condition of a mendicant?"—"The rules of chastity must be observed during the whole of life." "That is impossible ; is there no other way?"—"There is another, friend ; it is to be a pious man (Upasaka)." "What is there to be done in this condition?"—"It is necessary to abstain during the whole of life from murder, theft, pleasure,² lying, and the use of intoxicating liquors."³ To these five commandments, binding on every Buddhist, the rule imposed upon the mendicants adds five more, to say nothing of many

¹ C. R., b. 4, ch. 7. ² The illicit pleasures of sex must be understood.

³ H. B. I., p. 281.

more special obligations and regulations to which they are subject. Murder, theft, unchastity, lying, and drinking, are forbidden to them as to all others; the sixth commandment prohibits eating after mid-day; the seventh singing, dancing, and playing musical instruments; the eighth adorning the person with flowers and bands, or using perfume and ointment; the ninth sleeping on a high and large bed; the tenth accepting gold and silver. These several prohibitions aim, as is evident, at precisely the same objects which the founders of Christian orders have always had in view; that, namely, of weaning their disciples from the world by keeping from them the enjoyment of its luxuries, and preventing the acquisition of personal property.

The obligation to observe these rules commenced with the novitiate; a condition which, in Buddhist as in Catholic communities, precedes that of complete ordination. The novices are termed *Sramanera*, a word meaning little *Sramanas*, while the monks themselves are either *Sramana* or *Bhikshu*. Both these designations serve to express the nature of their vocation; *Sramana* being "an ascetic who subdues his senses," and *Bhikshu* "one who lives by alms."¹ The sisters are called *Bhikshuni*, and they are said to owe their origin to *Maha Prajapati*, the aunt of the great *Sramana Gautama*, who obtained from her nephew, through the intercession of the beloved disciple *Ananda*, the permission for her sex to follow their brothers in the way of salvation by poverty and chastity.²

There can be no question that, according to the

¹ II. B. I., pp. 275, 276.

² *Ibid.*, p. 278.

original practice of the mendicant orders, the vow was taken for life ; and this is, I believe, still the custom in most of the lands where Buddhism is in the ascendant. But in Siam, the monastic vow can at any time be cancelled by the superior of the monastery ; and this rule, which involves a gross abuse of the original institution, renders temporary asceticism universal in that country.¹ Another kind of degeneracy has occurred in Nepaul, where the ministers of religion, who elsewhere must be monks, are permitted to be married.²

The objects proposed to themselves by Buddhists, in embracing an ascetic life, are precisely the same as those proposed to themselves by Christians. By denying themselves the pleasures of this world, they hope to obtain a higher reward than other mortals ; whether in the shape of birth in a happier condition, or in that of complete emancipation from all birth whatsoever, which is the supreme goal of their religion. The means they pursue to attain these ends are also similar. The Pratimoksha Sutra, or Sutra of Emancipation, which forms the universal *regula* in all their monasteries, is worthy of a St Benedict or a St Francis. It lays down with the minutest elaboration, not only all the moral precepts that must be obeyed by the monk or nun, but all the little observances in regard to dress, eating, walking, social intercourse, and so forth, to which he must attend. It contains two hundred and fifty rules, and the breach of any of these is attended with its appropriate penance, according to the magnitude of the offence.

Asceticism was deeply rooted in the native land of

¹ Wheel, p. 45.

² Hodgson, T.R.A.S., vol. ii. p. 245.

Buddhism long before the appearance of the reformer who gave it, by the foundation of communities, an organisation and a purpose. Just as in Egypt there were many solitary saints before the time of Pachomius and Antony, so in India there were holy men who had subdued their senses before the gospel of deliverance was preached by Gautama Buddha. Some of these dispensed altogether with clothing, a custom which was frowned upon by Buddhism and put down wherever its influence was paramount. Others lived in lonely places, exposed to every sort of hardship and avoiding every form of carnal pleasure. The popular mind combined the practice of austerity with the acquisition of extraordinary powers over nature. Hence, no doubt, an additional motive for its exercise. The Ramayana abounds with descriptions of holy hermits, living on roots in the forests, and practising the utmost austerity. Visvamisra, for example, the very type of an ascetic, was a monarch, who determined to obtain from the gods the title of "Brahman saint," the highest to which he, not by birth a Brahman, could aspire. This was the manner in which he went to work :—

" His arms upraised, without a rest,
 With but one foot, the earth he pressed ;
 The air his food, the hermit stood
 Still as a pillar hewn from wood.
 Around him in the summer days
 Five mighty fires combined to blaze.
 In floods of rain no veil was spread,
 Save clouds, to canopy his head.
 In the dark dews both night and day
 Couched in the stream the hermit lay." ¹

Twice did the gods, alarmed at the power he was

¹ Griffith, *The Ramayan*, vol. i. p. 268.

likely to acquire, direct their efforts against his chastity. The first time the perfect nymph deputed on this errand, seen by him while bathing herself naked in the stream, caused him to forget his vow and dally with her for ten years. The second time the saint perceived the plot, but allowed himself to burst forth in words of unholy rage against the damsel who was trying to seduce him, and thus lost the merit of his former penance. After this he resolved never to speak a word, and persisted in his resolution, until the gods, in a body, addressed him in the long-desired form : "Hail, Brahman Saint."¹

Visvamisra is of course a mythical character, and his penance imaginary ; but the ascetic life he is described as leading was taken from models which the writers had before their eyes. All the marvels of the Thebaïd in Christian times were, in fact, anticipated in India by at least one thousand years.

How deeply the ascetic tendency is implanted in human nature is strikingly shown in the case of the Essenes, the Nazarites, and the Therapeutæ, who sprang from a religion whose ostensible precepts are eminently opposed to all such courses, that of the Jews. Judaism powerfully encouraged all those inclinations to which monasticism is fatal : the propagation of the species, the acquisition of property, the maintenance of family ties, and the enjoyment of the good things which this world has to offer. Yet from the bosom of this sober faith sprang bodies of men who neither ate flesh, nor drank wine, nor cohabited with women. It may be that the Jewish ascetics were not very numerous ; but it is clear, too,

¹ Griffith, *The Ramayan*, vol. i. p. 274.

that they were not so few as to be deemed by contemporary observers altogether unimportant. And the fascination which John the Baptist, pre-eminently an ascetic, exercised over his countrymen in the first century, is a sign that this mode of living was conducive among the Jews to that spiritual supremacy which it has so constantly received at the hands of Christians.

That Christianity should encourage a disposition which even Judaism could not check was no more than might be expected from the language and conduct of its founder and his earliest disciples. Christ was never married, and probably lived in complete chastity. Paul goes so far as to compare marriage unfavourably with celibacy. James upholds poverty as preferable to riches in the eyes of God. The whole of the New Testament abounds with passages in which present misery is declared to be the forerunner of future happiness, and present prosperity of future suffering. This is the very spirit of monasticism, and it is not surprising that from such a root such fruits have sprung. From a very early age devout Christians have felt that in renouncing individual property, marriage, personal freedom, and the various other joys which life in the world offers, they were fulfilling the dictates of their religion and preparing themselves for heaven. To illustrate this proposition effectually would be to write the history of the monastic orders. Beginning in the deserts of Egypt, these have extended throughout Europe, and have exercised a vast and potent influence on the extension of the Christian faith. Monks have been missionaries, preachers, martyrs, persecutors,

bishops, and popes. The greatest names who have ranged themselves under the banner of the Catholic Church have belonged to one or other of the several orders. And alongside of the monks, living by the same rule, helping them in their several tasks, the nuns have ever been forward in undergoing their share of austerity and undertaking their share of labour.

Very various have been the immediate motives that have led such large numbers of Christians to betake themselves to the monastery or the convent. Some have fled from riches and luxury ; others from poverty and wretchedness. Some have been sick of earthly pleasures ; others have sought to avoid the temptation of ever knowing them. Many have been drawn by the irresistible spell of asceticism to flee from opposing parents and unsympathising friends in order to embrace it ; others have been destined from their infancy, like the Mexican and Peruvian youth, to wear the cowl or to take the veil. But throughout the history of every order there has been the same fundamental idea sustaining its existence ; the idea, namely, that in becoming an ascetic, the person was consecrated to God, and became by that consecration purer, holier, and better than those who continued to pursue the ordinary avocations of secular life.

This consecration is not given without due solemnity. It is only after a novitiate, in which he has full experience of the privations to be undergone, that the candidate can be received into the order of which he desires to be a member. Should his resolution be unshaken after his year's trial as a novice, he may take the irrevocable vow of obedience, under which

those of poverty and chastity are comprehended. He is now a consecrated person. He has sacrificed himself completely to his divine Master, and whatever reward he may hope to receive must be given by that Master in a future state.

It is one of the principal weaknesses of Protestantism that it has omitted to provide for the ascetic instinct. It has lost thereby the mighty hold which the Catholic Church must ever possess over those who feel themselves moved to crucify the flesh and devote themselves wholly to spiritual things. Strange to say, this remarkable instinct has nevertheless broken out afresh within the bosom of Protestantism in recent times. The Shakers are but a somewhat novel species of monks and nuns. They abstain from marriage, though the two sexes live together in one community. Their chastity is said to be perfect. They give up all individual property for the common good. They wear a peculiar dress and are subject to peculiar rules. Lastly, they believe that they stand under the special guidance and protection of the Holy Spirit.

CHAPTER V.

CONSECRATED MEDIATORS.

HAVING seen the manner in which individuals devote themselves to the special service of their deities, we have now to observe the further fact that a whole class of men is devoted to this service by the demands of society. This class is the priesthood. They differ from the persons last treated of, inasmuch as the consecration of ascetics has reference exclusively to their own personal salvation, while the consecration of priests has reference exclusively to the salvation of others. A monk or a nun becomes by the act of profession a holier being; less occupied with the world; mentally nearer to God; better fitted to communicate with him than ordinary unchaste mortals. A priest becomes by the act of ordination a being endowed with special powers; better entitled to offer up the public prayers than others; more likely to be heard when he does so; more eligible as a channel of communication between men and God than unordained mortals. In other words, his functions are of a public, those of the monk of a private, kind.

We must not be confused by the fact that among Buddhists and among Catholics the two species of consecration are no longer completely distinct, the

monks in both of those great religions being at the same time priests. The early writings of Buddhism sufficiently evince the fact that no kind of public ministry was at first connected with the profession of a mendicant. He had simply to observe the precepts of his order, and to aim at such perfection as should ensure the deliverance of his soul. Priestly duties are now indeed performed by monks in Buddhist countries, but this is an addition to their regular vocation, not a necessary part of it; while in Catholic countries, the ecclesiastical character which the monks at present enjoy in no way belonged to them when the monastic orders were first established. The monks, as Montalembert observes, were at first an intermediate body between laity and clergy, in whom the latter were to see an ideal which it was not possible for all to attain. Technically, however, the monks formed a part of the laity, and the steps by which they came to be considered as the "regular clergy" are, according to the same high authority, difficult to follow.¹ Self-consecration, and consecration to ecclesiastical duties were therefore two very different things, and the distinction between regular and secular clergy shows that, though somewhat obliterated in appearance, the two ideas are still kept apart.

In all religions that have risen above the rudest stage, those who desire to become priests are initiated by certain fixed ceremonies. Thus is the consecration given which fits them to convey to God the wishes of mortals, and to mortals the will of God. To take an example from a very primitive form of faith, the "Angekoks," or priests of the Greenlanders, receive

¹ M. d'O., vol. i. p. 288 ; vol. ii. p. 57.

their commission only after long and exhausting rites, in which a familiar spirit is supposed to appear to them, and to accompany them to heaven and hell. Should they fail ten times in obtaining the assistance of such a spirit, they are compelled to lay down their offices. The spirit, when he comes, holds a conversation with the Angekok, who is thus installed in his profession by supernatural means.¹ So also, among the American tribes in New France, we are told that the "Jongleurs" by profession never obtained this character till after they had been prepared for it by fasts, which they carried to a great extent, and during which they beat the drum, cried, shouted, sung and smoked. Their installation was subsequently accomplished in a sort of Bacchanalia, with ceremonies of a highly extravagant nature.² Among a certain tribe of negroes, the priests are taken from a class of men termed "living sacrifices,"³ who live at the expense of others, taking whatever they require, and who wear their hair, like the Nazarites, unshorn. Here their consecration is marked by these peculiar characteristics, and appears to be impressed upon them by some dedication made without their own consent. In another negro nation, there is a priestess of a certain snake, who is marked in a peculiar way over the whole body, and held in great esteem. Every year some young girls are seized by force and taken to this priestess, who marks them artistically, initiates them in religious songs and dances, marries them in a manner to the snake, and consecrates them as priestesses of that divinity. With others again the priesthood is hereditary,

¹ H. G., p. 253-256.

² N. F., vol. iii. p. 363.

³ G. d. M., p. 328.

the consecration in this case being imprinted once for all on certain families, and not imparted, as in the instances given above, by rites affecting only the individual who undergoes them. A peculiar modification of the hereditary principle is where the preference is given to him, among several sons, who dares to pull certain grains (which have been previously put in) out of the teeth of his deceased father, and place them in the mouth of the corpse. Here the consecration is partly inherited, partly personal. Elsewhere a priest or fetich-maker is made "by all sorts of silly ceremonies at a meal," and a string with consecrated objects is hung round his neck in token of his condition.¹

Both principles, the hereditary and the personal, were known in Mexico. The priests of Vitziliputzli succeeded by right of birth; the priests of other idols by election or by an offering made in their infancy. Priests were consecrated to their holy office by an unction which, as Father Acosta justly observes, resembled that of the Catholic Church. They were anointed from head to foot, and the hair was left to hang down in tresses moist from the application of the ointment. But when they were going to perform the offices of their sacred calling on mountains, or in dark caves, they were anointed with an altogether different substance, compounded by a peculiar process from certain venomous reptiles. This was supposed to give them courage.²

The consecration of the Levitical priesthood, originally personal, descended from father to son, and was moreover confined to the members of this single tribe. It could not be repeated after its first perform-

¹ G. d. M., p. 328.

² H. I., b. 5, ch. 26.

ance. Hence we have in this case an interesting example, not only of an hereditary priesthood, but also of the manner in which its exclusive sanctity was supposed to have been originally established. Moses, who derived his appointment directly from Jehovah, was employed to consecrate Aaron and his sons by means of an elaborate and imposing ritual communicated to him by that deity himself. The means thus taken (in Jehovah's own words) "to hallow them, to minister unto me in the priest's office," were effectual for all time; the descendants of Aaron after that being priests by nature. How great was the value of the consecration thus given, may be seen by the fact that Moses was ordered to threaten the penalty of death against any one who should dare to manufacture oil similar to that used in anointing Aaron and his sons.¹

Priestly power among Christian nations is communicated in a solemn ceremonial, and is conferred only upon the individual recipient. It does not descend in his family, but it is capable of being imparted by bishops, who have themselves received a higher grade of priestly consecration. By some it is actually supposed that a mysterious virtue, derived directly from Christ through the apostles, is conveyed to the recipient of holy orders. But whether the apostolical succession be conveyed or not in the Ordination Service of the Church of England, it is certain that a high authority is held to be given to the priest by the laying on of the hands of the Bishop and of the other priests present at the time.

The rights which he receives are thus expressed:—

¹ *Exod.* xxviii. 29 ; xxx. 30-33.

“Receive the Holy Ghost for the office and work of a priest in the Church of God, now committed unto thee by the imposition of our hands. Whose sins thou dost forgive, they are forgiven; and whose sins thou dost retain, they are retained, and be thou a faithful dispenser of the Word of God, and of his holy sacraments. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.”

After this the Bishop delivers the Bible to each of the candidates, saying:—

“Take thou authority to preach the Word of God, and to minister the holy sacraments in the congregation where thou shalt be lawfully appointed thereunto.”

Here it may be observed that there are three powers conveyed by this ordination: the power of preaching, the power of administering the sacraments, and the power of forgiving and retaining sins. Since the salvation of Christians depends upon their admission to the sacraments, and upon the forgiveness of their sins, it is obvious that the priest who may debar them from the one, and refuse the other, receives in his consecration the keys of the kingdom of heaven. In their communications to the Almighty through the mediation of such priests men are in possession of an instrument of the very highest efficacy.

The terrible reality which the belief in the ecclesiastical privilege of forgiving sins may sometimes have, is graphically exhibited in M. de Lamartine's touching poem entitled “Jocelyn.” Therein a bishop, taken prisoner and condemned to death in the French Revolution, sends for a young deacon who was living in concealment in the Alps with a maiden who loved him deeply, and whom (since the irrevocable vows

of a priest were not yet taken) he intended to marry. Regardless of all his pleading the Bishop, under the threat of his dying anathema, forces the unhappy youth to receive priestly orders at his hands, solely in order that he may then listen to the episcopal confession and forgive the episcopal sins. Marriage was now rendered impossible by the vow he had taken; and thus two lives were consigned to enduring misery that a bishop might die in peace. Surely the morality which could lead to such a consummation is self-condemned!

PART II.

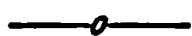
MEANS OF COMMUNICATION
DOWNWARDS.

EXTERNAL MANIFESTATIONS OF RELIGIOUS SENTIMENT.



Second Part.

MEANS OF COMMUNICATION DOWNWARDS.



CLASSIFICATION.

WE proceed now from the several methods by which men, in all ages and in all countries, have sought to convey their wishes, aspirations, and emotions upwards, to those by which their several deities have in their opinion conveyed their commands, decisions, and intentions downwards. The classification will follow as closely as the subject permits that of the preceding part. Consecration, the quality pertaining to man's instruments of communication with God, will be replaced by holiness, the quality pertaining to God's instruments of communication with man. Thus, corresponding to the consecrated actions of prayer, sacrifice, and praise, we shall have the holy events of omens, signs, miracles, and so forth. Corresponding to the consecrated places where men pay their devotions, we shall find the holy places which some higher being has blessed with tokens of his presence. Corresponding to the consecrated objects bestowed by the creature on the Creator,

we shall discover holy objects through which some peculiar grace is conveyed by the Creator to the creature. To consecrated men will correspond holy men, who speak to their fellows with an authority higher than their own; and these holy men will fall into two classes, those whose regular work it is to represent the deity on earth, and those who are sent on some special occasion for some special purpose. Lastly, a separate division (having no correlative among means of communication upwards) must be given to holy books, for a most important place in the history of religions is occupied by treatises written by the gods for the use of men. To these then the final chapter of this portion of the work must be devoted. Pass we now to holy events.

CHAPTER I.

HOLY EVENTS.

MANIFOLD beyond the possibility of complete computation are the signs and intimations vouchsafed to the ignorance and weakness of man by the celestial powers. They speak to him through the ordinary phenomena of nature; they instruct him through her rare and more striking exhibitions; they guide his footsteps through prodigies and marvels. Sometimes addressing him spontaneously, without any attempt on his part to elicit their intentions, they open their views or announce the future; sometimes replying to his anxious inquiries, they point out the truth and relieve his perplexity. Consider first the former class of divine manifestations, in which the human being is a merely passive recipient of the communication granted.

Dreams are an excellent example of this class of events. The belief that they are of supernatural origin is both wide-spread and ancient. Possibly there is no country in which it has not been held to a greater or less extent, even though it may not have formed an article in the established creed. Among the Africans in and about Sierra Leone, for example, a dream is received as judicial evidence of witchcraft, and the prisoner accused on this slender testimony "frequently acknowledges the charge and submits to his

sentence without repining.¹” On the American continent, where dreams (says Charlevoix) “are regarded as true oracles and notices from heaven,”² it is plain that the like faith in their intimations prevails. Although explained in a variety of ways, now as the rational soul going abroad, while the sensitive soul remained behind, now as advice from the familiar spirits, now as a visit from the soul of the object dreamt of, the dream is always regarded as a sacred thing. It was thought to be the most usual way taken by the gods of making their wills known to men. Hence they took care to obey the intimations given in dreams; a savage who had dreamt that his little finger was cut off actually submitting to that operation; and another, who had found himself in his dream a prisoner among enemies, getting himself tied to a stake and burnt in various parts of the body.³ The Jews have in their ritual a singular ceremony for removing the influence of bad dreams. The person who has dreamt something which seems to portend evil, is said to choose three friends, and standing before them as they sit, to repeat seven times: “A good dream have I seen.” To which they reply: “A good dream thou hast seen; it is good and shall be good; the compassionate God, who is good, make it good.” And the conversation between the dreamer and the interpreters continues for some time, the general effect being to convey God’s blessing to the former and convert his trouble into gladness. At the end the interpreters say: “Go eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a cheerful heart, for God

¹ N. A., vol. i. p. 260.

² H. N. F., vol. iii. p. 348.

³ H. N. F., vol. iii. pp. 353, 354.

now accepteth thy works. And penitence and prayers and righteousness will set aside the evil that hath been doomed, and peace be unto us and unto all Israel, Amen." To this the author of the book appends the remark that "the Jews believe that all dreams come to pass according to the interpretation that is made of them," for which reason they relate their dreams to none but friends.¹ But that they can believe it to be in the power of their friends to *change* the meaning of the dream by an arbitrary interpretation seems scarcely possible. It may, therefore, be the meaning of this passage that an unfavourable interpretation is in itself ominous of misfortune, or that they are desirous not to hear the worst construction that can be put upon a dream.

Belief in the prophetic signification of dreams is not only not discountenanced by the Christian religion, but is explicitly taught by it. If in the present age this belief has fallen somewhat out of repute, this is not because there can be any doubt that the inspired writers of the Christian Scriptures firmly held it, but is a feature of the general relaxation of the bonds of dogma which characterises the modern mind. To take a few instances: when Abraham had called Sarah his sister, and thus permitted the king of Gerar to appropriate her, God himself came to Abimelech by night in a dream, and told him that she was a married woman.² Highly important information as to the future of his race was given to Jacob in a dream.³ His son Joseph enjoyed an extraordinary faculty, not only of dreaming true dreams himself, but also of interpreting the dreams of others. It was his own

¹ Rel. of Jews, p. 71-74.

² Gen. xx. 3.

³ Gen. xxviii. 11-15.

prophetic dreams which led to his sale into the hands of the traders by his brothers, and it was his power of correct interpretation which both freed him from his prison in Egypt, and led to his promotion to the high office he afterwards held at the Egyptian court.¹ Moreover, Joseph, who must be considered an authority on the subject, expressly informed Pharaoh, when that monarch had related his dreams, that God had showed him what he was about to do.² A most important dream was granted to Solomon, to whom "the Lord appeared in a dream by night," and told him to ask whatever favour he might wish ; on which occasion the king preferred his celebrated request for wisdom.³ Another ruler, Nebuchadnezzar, was also visited by a prophetic dream, the nature of which was revealed to the interpreter, Daniel, "in a night vision," by God himself, who thus admitted that it was he who had sent it. A further communication was made to Nebuchadnezzar, in the dream which he himself has recorded in the proclamation which bears witness at the same time to the fulfilment of its warning.⁴ But of all the dreams handed down to us by the Scriptural writers, by far the most material, as evidence of their Divine character, is that on which the mystery of the Incarnation mainly rests. Take away the dream in which Joseph was informed that the Holy Ghost was the parent of Mary's first-born child,⁵ and that mystery will depend exclusively on a story of an angel's visit, of necessity related by Mary herself ;⁶ for obvious reasons not the most trustworthy witness

¹ Gen. xxxvii. 5-11 ; Gen. xl., xli.

² Gen. xli. 25-28.

³ Kings iii. 5-15.

⁴ Daniel ii., iv.

⁵ Matt. i. 20.

⁶ Luke i. 35.

on so delicate a point. But this is not all ; for it was by a dream that the Magi, after their adoration, were warned to escape the vengeance of Herod ;¹ and by a dream that the life of the infant Christ was preserved in the massacre of the innocents.² Christianity, therefore, may be said to owe its very existence to the celestial intimations conveyed in dreams, and Christians cannot consistently embrace any theory which would lead to a denial of their holy and prophetic character. Since, moreover, we have numerous instances in the Bible of such dreams being granted to heathens and idolaters, it is plain that the Christian deity does not confine his nocturnal visitations to orthodox believers. If the chief butler, the chief baker, Pharaoh, and Nebuchadnezzar dreamt prophetically, so may any of us at any time according to this teaching. On the other hand, this power may be due to a special outpouring of the Holy Spirit, as implied in the prediction of Joel that “your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions.”³ So that we may completely endorse the conclusion of the Rev. Principal Barry, who discusses this subject with much solemnity in Smith’s “Dictionary of the Bible,” “that the Scripture claims the dream, as it does every other action of the human mind, as a medium through which God may speak to man, either directly, that is, as we call it, ‘providentially,’ or indirectly, in virtue of a general influence upon all his thoughts ;” but whether there is anything to be said in support of the further inference that “revelation by dreams” may be expected to pass away, is not equally clear.

¹ Matt. ii. 12.² Matt. ii. 13.³ Joel ii. 28.

Assuredly no passage can be produced which, even by implication, states that this method of communication was temporary or transient; and considering that it continued in operation from the days of Abraham to those of Jesus, it is hard to see how the Bible can be made to support the notion that it is to cease entirely at any period of human history. On the contrary, the Scriptural writers, both old and new, would practically have agreed with Homer : *καὶ γὰρ τ' ὄναρ ἐκ Διός ἐστιν*—“The dream also is from Zeus.”¹ Indeed, the passage in which that deity sends the personified Dream to bear a message to Agamemnon,² differs only in its mythological colouring from the representations in the Bible of dreams in which God comes or appears to the sleeper, or in which he charges an angel to convey to him his purpose or his will. And the discrimination commanded to be exercised between prophecies or dreams deserving attention, and prophecies or dreams contrived merely to test the fidelity of the Israelites, and therefore not to be received as true, fully corresponds to the distinction drawn in the *Odyssey* between dreams passing through the horn gate, and dreams passing through the ivory gate. Those that came through the horn gate brought true intimations; but those that came through the ivory gate were sent to deceive.³

Another involuntary action through which God communicates with man is sneezing. From the lowest savages to the most educated nation on the face of the earth, this simple physical event is viewed as an omen. A peculiarity attending this particular kind of mani-

¹ *Iliad*, i. 63.

² *Ibid.*, ii. 8-15.

³ *Od.* xix. 560-568.

festation is, that it is usual for those present when it occurs to notice it by saying something of favourable augury. In Samoa, one of the Polynesian islands, it was common to say, "Life to you!"¹ an exclamation which in sense corresponds almost exactly to the German "Gesundheit!" (health), to the Italian "Salute!" and to our own "God bless you!" on the same occasion. South African savages have the same sentiment of the religious nature of the omen involved in sneezing. Thus, among the Kafirs we learn that "it used always to be said when a man sneezed, 'May Utikxo [God] ever regard me with favour.'" Canon Callaway, who has acutely noticed the parallelism among various nations in respect of the feeling associated with this action, further informs us that "among the Amazulu, if a child sneeze, it is regarded as a good sign; and if it be ill, they believe it will recover. On such an occasion they exclaim, 'Tutuka,' Grow. When a grown up person sneezes, he says, 'Bakiti, ngi hambe kade,' Spirits of our people, grant me a long life. As he believes that at the time of sneezing the spirit of his house is in some especial proximity to him, he believes it is a time especially favourable to prayer, and that whatever he asks for will be given; hence he may say, 'Bakwiti, inkomo,' Spirits of our people, give me cattle; or 'Bakwiti, abantwana,' Spirits of our people, give me children. Diviners among the natives are very apt to sneeze, which they regard as an indication of the presence of the spirits; the diviner adores by saying, 'Makosi,' Lords, or Masters."² A similar belief prevails among the Parsees, who consider a sneeze as a mark of the victory obtained over the evil spirits

¹ N. Y., p. 347.

² R. S. A., part i. p. 64.

who besiege the interior of the body by the fire which animates man, and who accordingly render thanks to Ahuramazda when this event happens.¹

Classical antiquity presents us with an example of a famous sneeze. At a critical moment in the expedition of the Ten Thousand against Artaxerxes, when they were left in a hostile country surrounded with perplexities and perils, Xenophon encouraged them by an address in which he urged that if they would take a certain course, they had, with the favour of the gods, many and good hopes of safety. Just at these words, *πτάρννται τις*—"somebody sneezes," and immediately the drooping hearts of the soldiery were comforted by this assurance of divine protection. With one impulse they worshipped the god; and Xenophon remarked that since, when they were in the very act of speaking of safety, this favourable augury of Zeus the Saviour had appeared, it seemed proper to him that they should vow thank-offerings to this deity, to be presented on their first arrival in a friendly country, and also that they should make a vow to sacrifice to the other gods according to their ability.² Not only is it customary in Germany to welcome a sneeze with the above-mentioned exclamation of "Gesundheit!" but a notion is stated to prevail that should one person be thinking of something in the future, and another sneeze at the moment he is thus engaged, the thing thought of will come to pass. So that the commonest character ascribed to sneezing is that of an auspicious omen.

Other phenomena may serve as omens, and such phenomena may be either natural or preternatural.

¹ Z. A., vol. ii. p. 592.

² Xen. Anab., iii. 2. 9.

In the first case their prophetic or significant character is entirely due to the interpretation put upon them by men; in the second, it is inherent in their very nature, which at once renders them conspicuous as exceptions to the usual course. Those of the first class have thus a dual function; contemplated on the one side, they are merely events belonging to the regular sequence of causes and effects; contemplated on the other, they are especially contrived as indications of the divine purposes. Hence, to one observer they may bear the appearance of ordinary phenomena; to another, better informed, they may convey important intimations of the future. Tacitus mentions, for example, the favourable augury that was granted to the Romans on the eve of a battle with the Germans by the flight of eight eagles who sought the woods.¹ The same author informs us of a melancholy omen which occurred to Pactus when he and his army were crossing the Euphrates. Without apparent cause, the horse which bore the consular insignia turned backwards.² Each of these signs was of course followed by its appropriate events. A belief which is thus found in a civilised nation naturally has its prototype among the uncivilised. The Kafirs believe that the spirits send them omens. Thus, a wild animal entering a kraal is "regarded as a messenger from the spirits to remind the people that they have done something wrong." Another omen which is considered very terrible is the bleating of a sheep while it is being slaughtered. A councillor, to whom it occurred to hear this sign, was told by a prophet that it "foreboded his death." Strange to say, his chief

¹ Tac. Ann., ii. 17. 2.

² Ibid., xv. 7. 3.

soon after sent soldiers to kill him, and the man only averted his threatened fate by escaping to Natal. Among other natural events which are omens to the Kafirs are, "a child born dead; a woman two days in parturition; a man burnt while sitting by the fire, unless he were asleep or drunk."¹ "An unexpected whirlwind will suggest to" the Chinese "the contest of evil spirits; and the flying of a crow in a peculiar direction fill them with consternation. In such a deplorable state," gravely observes the missionary who records these facts, "is the heathen mind."² Perhaps he did not consider that there were many in more enlightened countries who would be alarmed at the omen implied by a dinner-party of thirteen, and who would regard it as of evil augury to begin a journey on a Friday. In such a deplorable state is the Christian mind.

Ceylon appears to be remarkable for the faith placed by its inhabitants in omens, which are even said to regulate their whole conduct and to intimate their destiny from birth onwards. Children, of whose future the astrologers predict evil, are sometimes destroyed in order to avoid their pre-determined misery. On going out in the morning, the Singhalese anxiously remark the object they encounter first, in order to deduce from it a favourable or unfavourable augury for the business of the day. "I, as a European," says the author who tells us these facts, "was always a glad sight to them;" for "a white man or a woman with child" were good omens; but beggars and deformed persons so unlucky, as even to stop these hapless folk from proceeding in the work they were

¹ K. N., pp. 162, 163.

² C. O., vol. ii. p. 208.

about during the day on which these boding signs were the first things to meet their gaze.¹ Another phenomenon of a somewhat less ordinary kind serves as an omen to the Singhalese, though apparently only in reference to a single fact. There is visible in Ceylon "a peculiar and beautiful meteor," termed "Buddha rays," which "is supposed by the natives only to appear over a temple or tomb of Buddha's relics, and from thence to emanate." The appearance of these rays is taken by believers as a sign that the Buddhist faith will last for the destined span of 5000 years from its founder's death;² much as the rainbow is held by Jews and Christians to be the token of a promise that God will never again punish the world by a universal deluge.

The next class of omens need not consist of phenomena which are absolutely beyond the range of physical law, provided they be sufficiently rare to strike the imagination of observers as marvellous occurrences. For example, an eclipse of the sun may be an omen to savage or very uninstructed people; a comet, being more unusual, will seem ominous to nations standing on a much higher grade of culture. Advancing still higher, extraordinary and inexplicable sights in the heavens or on earth will stand for portents to all but the scientifically-minded. An example of the latter class is found in the temporary withering of the Ruminal tree, which had sheltered the infancy of Romulus and Remus 840 years before.³ At the time at which Tacitus begins his history, there were, he says, prodigies in the sky and on earth,

¹ A. I. C., p. 194.

² E. Y., vol. i. p. 337.

³ Tac. Ann., xiii. 58.

warnings of lightnings and presages of future things.¹ Popular imagination, besides converting natural, but rare, phenomena into omens, invents others which are altogether supernatural. In the disturbed days of Otho and Vitellius, it was rumoured that a form of larger than human dimensions had issued from the shrine of Juno ; that a statue of Julius on the Tiberine island had turned round from west to east without any perceptible agency ; that an ox in Etruria had spoken ; that animals had brought forth strange progeny ; and that other alarming exceptions to the laws of nature had been observed.² The supposed contraction of a man's shadow is thought in South Africa to portend his death.³ The Irish Banshee is a being who does not belong to any species recognised by science, and who, moreover, is heard to scream only before a death in the family to which she is attached. The ticking sound produced by a small insect in the wooden furniture of a room is termed in Scotland the death-watch, and has the same ominous significance. To one family, a drummer heard to drum outside the castle is significant of death ; in another, it may be that a particular ghost, seen by a casual visitor who knows nothing of its meaning, conveys a similar intimation. The birth of great men is often supposed to be marked by extraordinary signs. "At my nativity," says Owen Glendower,

"The front of heaven was full of fiery shapes,
Of burning cressets ; and at my birth,
The frame and huge foundation of the earth
Shak'd like a coward."

¹ Tac. Hist., i. 3. 2.

² Ibid., i. 86. 1.

³ R. S. A., pt. i. p. 126.

And again :—

“ The goats ran from the mountains, and the herds
Were strangely clamorous to the frightened fields.
These signs have marked me extraordinary ;
And all the courses of my life do show
I am not in the roll of common men.” ¹

From signs which the bounty of nature supplies without effort on the part of human beings, we proceed to those which are granted only in reply to solicitations on the part of some person or persons in quest of supernatural information. Of these, a leading place must be assigned to those which are obtained through the medium of diviners. Divination is in many parts of the world a highly-developed and lucrative art. The natives of South Africa, being in any perplexity, resort to the professional diviner to help them out of it. Should cattle be lost, should a goat be too long in giving birth to its kids, should a relation be ill, the diviner is asked to inform those who consult him, both what it is that has happened, and what they are to do. Sometimes his replies are assisted by sticks held by the people, who beat them vehemently on the ground when he divines correctly, and gently when he divines incorrectly ; sometimes he himself makes use of small sticks or bones, which indicate by their movements the thing desired to be known ; sometimes again mysterious voices, supposed to be those of spirits, are heard to speak. In a case related by one of Canon Callaway's informants (who was quite sceptical as to that class of diviners who required the people to strike the ground), a correct answer was given by a diviner who employed bones as his pro-

¹ Henry IV., pt. 1, act iii. scene 1.

fessional instruments. He had gone to inquire about a goat of his brother's, which had been yearning some days, and had not brought forth. The diviner discovered from his bones what was the matter; he declared that the she-goat had been made ill by sorcerers, and told them that when they reached home it would have given birth to two kids. The prediction was fulfilled. On reaching home there were two kids, a white and a grey one; the very colours the diviner had seen in his inspired vision. "I was at once satisfied," observes the narrator.¹ Another mode of divining is by the aid of "familiar spirits," who address the consulting party without being themselves visible. A native relates that his adopted father went to inquire of a diviner by spirits (named Umancele) concerning his wife's illness. When the relations of the sick woman entered to salute, some heard the spirits saluting them, saying, "Good-day, So and So." The person thus addressed started, and exclaimed, "Oh, whence does the voice come? I was saluting Umancele yonder." The divination in this case was not successful, and the narrator pathetically regrets that a bullock was given to the diviner for his false information. In another case a woman, who likewise divined by means of spirits, was perfectly correct in all she said. Some members of a family in which a little boy suffered from convulsions went to consult her; and she discovered, or rather the spirits discovered for her, what was the matter with him; what was the relationship of those who had come; and what were their circumstances. She prescribed a remedy, and predicted a complete recovery. The

¹ R. S. A., pt. iii. p. 334-336.

cause of the illness was, according to her, the displeasure of ancestral spirits. A sacrifice was to be offered to them ; and the village was to be removed to another place. These things done, she declared that the boy would have no more of the convulsions from which he suffered. If he did, they might take back their money. All turned out as she had said, to the very letter.¹

The priests of the North American tribes have a peculiar method of divination. Having received a handful of tobacco as a fee, they will summon a spirit to answer the inquiries of their visitors. This they do by enclosing themselves in lodges, in which they utter incantations. As may be supposed, the spirits who obey the summons of the Indian priest are not much more useful as guides to action than those who figure at the *séance* of his civilised competitor, the medium. Their replies, "though usually clear and correct, are usually of that profoundly ambiguous purport which leaves the anxious inquirer little wiser than he was before."² Brinton, however, having stated this, proceeds to speak of cases, apparently well attested, in which the diviners have foreseen coming events with unaccountable clearness. For instance, when Captain Jonathan Carver, in 1767, was among the Killistenoes, and that tribe was suffering from want of food, the chief priest consulted the divinities, and predicted with perfect accuracy the hour on the following day when a canoe would arrive. Brinton adds, on the authority of John Mason Brown, that when Mr Brown and two companions were pursuing an "apparently hopeless quest" for a band of Indians, they were met by some warriors of that very band,

¹ R. S. A., pt. iii. p. 361-374.

² M. N. W., p. 268.

who declared that the appearance of the white men had been exactly described by the medicine-man who had sent them. And what renders the story remarkable is, that "the description was repeated to Mr Brown by the warriors before they saw his two companions." The priest was unable to explain what he had done, except by saying that "he saw them coming, and heard them talk on their journey."¹

Among the Ostiacks in former days, the priests, when they intended to divine, caused themselves to be bound, threw themselves on the ground, and made all sorts of grimaces and contortions till they felt themselves inspired with a reply to the question that had been put to the idol. Those who had come to consult the oracle, sighed and moaned and struck upon certain vessels so as to make a noise, till they saw a bluish vapour, which they conceived to be the spirit of prophecy, and which, while spreading over all the spectators, seized the diviner and caused him to fall into convulsions.²

In ancient China, "the instruments of divination were the shell of the tortoise and the stalks of a certain grass or reed."³ These are frequently spoken of in the sacred books as the "tortoise and milfoil," and there are historical examples of their employment. The following rules for divination are given by a speaker in the Shoo King:—

"Having chosen and appointed officers for divining by the tortoise and by the milfoil, they are to be charged *on occasion* to perform their duties. *In doing this*, they will find *the appearances* of rain, clearing

¹ M. N. W., pp. 270, 271.

² Bernard, vol. viii. p. 412.

³ C. C., vol. iii. Proleg. p. 196.

up, cloudiness, want of connection, and crossing; and *the symbols*, solidity and repentance. In all, *the indications* are seven;—five given by the tortoise, and two by the milfoil, by which the errors of *affairs* may be traced out. These officers having been appointed, when the operations with the tortoise and milfoil are proceeded with, three men are to obtain and interpret the indications and symbols, and the consenting words of two of them are to be followed.”¹

Further instructions are then given in case the Emperor, nobles, officers, or people, and any or all of these, should disagree with the tortoise and milfoil; the greater weight being given to the latter.²

Of modern divination in China, Dr Legge recounts the following story:—

“I once saw a father and son divining after one of the fashions of the present day. They tossed the bamboo roots, which came down in the unlucky positions for a dozen times in succession. At last a lucky cast was made. They looked into each other’s faces, laughed heartily, and rose up, delighted, from their knees. The divination was now successful, and they dared not repeat it!”³

Here it seems that heaven was merely called in to give its sanction to a foregone conclusion.

The Singhalese have a curious method of discovering, by a species of divination, what god it is who has caused the illness of a patient. “With any little stick,” says Knox, “they make a bow, and on the string thereof they hang a thing they have to cut betel-nuts, somewhat like a pair of scissors; then holding the stick or bow by both ends, they repeat the

¹ C. C., vol. iii. p. 335. ² Ibid., p. 337. ³ Ibid., Proleg. p. 197.

names of all, both god and devils : and when they come to him who hath afflicted them, then the iron or the bowstring will swing.”¹

Divination, as is well known, was regularly practised by the ancients, who read the will of the gods in the entrails of animals, and who employed, as a help in foreseeing the future and guiding their conduct, the class of professional diviners known as augurs.

Another method, by which it has often been supposed that God entered into communication with man, is that of the movements of the stars and planets. Hence the pseudo-science of astrology, which was so much cultivated in the middle ages before its supersession by astronomy. In India, observes Karl Twisten, the stars were very early consulted as oracles. *Manu* excludes astrologers from the sacrifices ; and in later times astrology became very general. According to Twisten, there is an astrologer in almost every Hindu community, who is much consulted, and determines the favourable moment for every important undertaking.² Antiquity, wide extension, and great persistency may all be pleaded on behalf of the notion that terrestrial events are foreshadowed by a system of celestial signals. There is a touch of astrological belief in the evangelical narrative that the birth of Christ was intimated to the Magi by a star in the east.

Sometimes, when it was desirable not to ascertain future events, but to decide between guilt and innocence, truth and falsehood, the divine Being himself was called in as umpire, and was supposed to convey his judgment by the turn of events in a pre-arranged case. This is the theory of those communications

¹ H. R. C., p. 76.

² R. I., p. 285.

from God to man which are made by ordeals. Ordeals were of various kinds, according to the nature of the issue to be tried. Did one man charge another with some kind of disgraceful conduct, the accuser was summoned to put his words to the test of a single combat, in which truth was held to lie on the side of the victor; was an old woman suspected of witchcraft, she was thrown into the nearest pond, with thumbs and toes tied together, where her floating was regarded as certain evidence of her guilt. Innocence of legal crime, or in the case of women, of adultery, has very frequently been established by the method of ordeals. Several authors have noticed the ordeals in use among the natives on the west coast of Africa. One of them, writing of Sierra Leone, informs us that if an accused person can find a chief to patronise him, he is permitted to clear himself by submitting either to have a hot iron applied to his skin, or to dip his hand in boiling oil to pull out some object put into it, or to have his tongue stroked with a red-hot copper ring. Since his being burnt is considered as a proof of guilt, it would not appear that the chances of escape were great. "Upon the Gold Coast, the ordeal consists in chewing the bark of a tree, with a prayer that it may cause his death if he be not innocent. In the neighbourhood of Sierra Leone," a very peculiar ordeal is practised, that, namely, of drinking water prepared from the bark of a certain tree, and termed "red water." Before taking it, the drinker repeats a prayer containing an imprecation on himself if guilty. Should this decoction cause purging or pains in the bowels, it is a proof of guilt; should it, on the contrary, excite vomiting, and produce no effect on the bowels for

twenty-four hours, an acquittal ensues, and the person who has thus successfully undergone the trial is held in higher esteem than he enjoyed before.¹ Sometimes this singular mode of trial is employed in cases where a corpse is supposed to have accused some person of causing the death of its former owner.² On the Gold Coast, "every person entering into any obligation is obliged to drink the swearing liquor." Thus, should one nation intend to assist another, "all the chief ones are obliged to drink this liquor, with an imprecation that their *fetich* may punish them with death if they do not assist them with utmost vigour to extirpate their enemy." Since, however, a dispensing power over such oaths has been exercised by the priests, some negroes observe the precaution, before taking oaths, of causing the priest to swear first, and then drink the red water, with an imprecation that the fetich may punish him if he absolves any one without the consent of all the parties interested in the contract.³

The sanction of Scripture is given to an ordeal of precisely this nature in the case of women charged with adultery ; and it is curious to find the very same mode of testing the fidelity of wives employed both by the ancient Hebrews and the modern negroes. The law of Moses was, that if a man suspected his wife of unfaithfulness, and the "spirit of jealousy" came upon him, he might take her to the priest (with an offering, of course), and leave him to deal with her in the following manner: Taking holy water in an earthen vessel, the priest was to mix in it some of the dust of

¹ N. A., vol. i. p. 129-133.

² S. L., p. 124-127.

³ D. C. G., pp. 124, 125.

the floor of the tabernacle, and set the woman with her head uncovered, and the jealousy offering in her hands, "before the Lord." He was then to "charge her with an oath," saying, that if she was pure, she was to be free from the bitter water that caused the curse, but if not, the Lord was to make her a curse and an oath among her people, causing her hips (or thighs) to disappear and her belly to swell. The water was to go into her bowels to produce these effects. Hereupon the woman was to say, "Amen, amen." According to the effects of the bitter water upon her constitution, was her guilt or her innocence adjudged to be.¹

Now the procedure of the negroes, in similar cases, is almost an exact reproduction (it can scarcely be an imitation) of that enjoined by Jehovah. "Red water" is administered, instead of "bitter water;" but with this exception, precisely the same method is pursued, and precisely the same doctrine underlies the use of the ordeal. God is expected, both by Jews and negroes, to manifest the truth where human skill is incompetent to discover it. The negroes, according to Bosman, believe that where the red water is drunk by one who makes a false declaration, he will either "be swelled by that liquor till he bursts," or will "shortly die of a languishing sickness; the first punishment they imagine more peculiar to women, who take this draught to acquit them of any accusation of adultery;" a belief which curiously reminds us of the old Jewish superstition, that the hips will fall away and the belly swell in the case of the adulterous wife who has taken the bitter water on a false pretence. Bosman

¹ Num. v. 11-31.

himself has correctly observed on the remarkable similarity of the two procedures.¹

A slightly different mode of trying suspected adulteresses by ordeal prevails among the Ostiacks (in Northern Asia). Should an Ostiack entertain doubts of his wife's fidelity, he cuts off a handful of hair from a bear's skin, and takes it to her. If innocent, she receives it without hesitation ; but if guilty, she does not venture to touch it, and is accordingly repudiated. The conviction reigns among these people, that were a woman to lie under these circumstances, the bear to whom the hair belonged would revive in three days and come to devour her.²

More important, however, and more universal than any of the above means of communication from God to man, is the method of communication by miracles. There is probably no great religion in the world, the establishment of which has been altogether dissociated from miracles. They form the most striking, most indisputable, most intelligible proof of the divine will. Not indeed that there is any close logical connection between the performance of a wonder, and the truth of the wonder-worker's doctrines ; but popular imagination jumps readily to the conclusion that a man, whom rumour or tradition has invested with supernatural powers over nature, must also be in possession of correct opinions, or even of superhuman knowledge, on the mysterious questions with which religion deals. Hence ecclesiastical historians, of all ages and countries, have sought to show that those from whom they deduced the systems in which they wished their readers to believe, were either themselves gifted with

¹ D. C. G., p. 125.

² Bernard, vol. viii. pp. 44, 45.

thaumaturgic faculties, or were the subjects of special marvels worked upon them. Such miracles have always served as their credentials, indicating their high character, and entitling them to demand the obedience of mankind to the commands they brought.

The establishment of Buddhism, for example, was attended by the performance of extraordinary miracles. Not only did the Buddha himself frequently perform supernatural feats; not only did his disciples, when they attained a certain grade of sanctity, receive the faculty of flying and doing other wonderful things; but he actually proved the superiority of his claims over those of others by a pitched battle in thaumaturgy. Certain Tirthyas, or heretical teachers, had the audacity to challenge him to contend with them in working miracles, and the trial of skill ended, of course, in their ignominious defeat.¹ Much in the same way did Moses enter into a rivalry with Pharaoh's magicians, who were overcome by his superior miracles as the Tirthyas were by those of Gautama Buddha. As Jewish prophets and Christian saints received by spiritual inheritance the power of performing miracles, so also did the Fathers of Buddhism. Of one of the greatest of these, named Nagardjuna, it is related that a Brahman who had entered into a dispute with him produced a magical pond, in the middle of which was a lotus with a thousand leaves, but that Nagardjuna produced a magical elephant which destroyed the magical pond.² This again may remind us of the serpent of Moses, which swallowed up the serpents of the magicians; or of the fire brought down from heaven by Elijah in his contro-

¹ H. B. I., p. 162-189.

² Wassiljew, p. 234.

versy with the prophets of Baal. Another eminent Buddhist, Asvagosha, was remarkable as a preacher. The officials at the court of a certain king reproached him with holding this holy man in too high esteem. The king thereupon took seven horses, kept them six days without food, and then led them to the place where Asvagosha was preaching, to be fed. The horses would not touch the food that was offered, but shed tears at the words of the preacher.¹

The history of the Mongols records some equally wonderful performances on the part of a Lama (or priest) named Bogda. When some messengers came to meet him, he raised his hand in a threatening way against a river, the waters of which immediately began to run upwards instead of downwards; "by which miracle," observes the historian, "an unshakeable faith was established in all minds." No wonder. The division of the Red Sea and the Jordan were child's play to this. The same man caused many others to believe by suddenly producing a spring in a dry place. In another country which he visited, he subdued all the dragons and other baneful creatures to his will.²

If the founder of the Mussulman religion did not claim any direct power of performing miracles, yet the communication to him of the Suras which compose the Koran was a standing miracle. He professed to fall into an ecstatic condition, in which he received the direct instructions of his God; and his care, when entering the sick-room of a friend, to avoid treading on the angels' wings which he saw extended in all directions, indicates a pretension to more than human faculties. The present votaries of the Mohammedan

¹ Wassiljew, p. 232.

² G. O. M., p. 227.

faith believe in the power of their saints to work miracles, for we read of the sick being taken to their Sheik to be cured by the imposition of his feet.¹

That the Christian religion was largely indebted to miracles for its success during its early years need hardly be remarked. Not only did Christ himself perform miracles of the most extraordinary kind, but the power was, if not wholly, yet to some extent, transmitted to his apostles, and was frequently exercised by the saints and Fathers of the early Church. Jesus himself, according to tradition, relied largely on his miracles as proofs of his divine mission ; for when John the Baptist sent disciples to inquire who he was, he replied by telling them to report to their master that the blind received sight, the lame walked, the lepers were cleansed, the deaf heard, the dead were raised up, and the poor had the gospel preached to them. So that the possession of this unusual gift of healing and re-animating, was regarded by him (or, more accurately, by his biographers) as a sufficient answer to the doubt entertained by John whether he were really the Messiah, or whether another were to come.

How great was the importance attached to the possession of miraculous powers by the early Christian Church, may be gathered from a passage in which Irenæus endeavours to cover certain heretics with confusion, by asserting that they are unable to do the things that are commonly done by the adherents of the true faith. “ For they can neither confer sight on the blind, nor hearing on the deaf, nor chase away all sorts of demons—[none, indeed], except those that are sent into others by themselves, if they can even do so

¹ Dervishes, p. 347.

much as this. Nor can they cure the weak, or the lame, or the paralytic, or those who are distressed in any other part of the body, as has often been done in regard to bodily infirmity. Nor can they furnish effective remedies for those external accidents which may occur. And so far are they from being able to raise the dead, as the Lord raised them, and the apostles did by means of prayer, and as has been frequently done in the brotherhood on account of some necessity—the entire Church in that particular locality entreating [the boon] with much fasting and prayer, the spirit of the dead man has returned, and he has been bestowed in answer to the prayers of the saints—that they do not even believe this can possibly be done, [and hold] that the resurrection from the dead is simply an acquaintance with that truth which they proclaim.”¹ Thus, the cure of infirmities and diseases by supernatural means were every-day achievements of the early Christians; and even the dead were sometimes restored to life, when sufficient pains were taken to obtain the favourable attention of the Almighty. “It is not possible,” observes the same author in another place, “to name the number of the gifts which the Church [scattered] throughout the whole world has received from God, in the name of Jesus Christ, who was crucified under Pontius Pilate, and which she exerts day by day for the benefit of the Gentiles.”²

Hence the Mormons, who claim to possess at the present day the powers which have departed from Christians in general, are perfectly in accordance with Irenæus in holding that signs like these are invariably

¹ Irenæus *adv. Hæreses*, II. xxxi. 2.—A. N. L., vol. v. p. 241.

² *Ibid.*, II. xxxii. 4.—A. N. L., vol. v. p. 246.

attendant on the kingdom of God. Revelations, visions, the powers of prophecy, of healing, of speaking with tongues, of casting out devils, and working other miracles, are (they contend) the prerogatives of those who belong to this kingdom. History, in relating first the miracles of the Jewish patriarchs and prophets, then those of the Christian Fathers, powerfully supports this theory. Scripture in several unambiguous passages entirely confirms it. And the daily experience of the Latter-day Saints, if we accept their statements, bears witness to its truth, by presenting abundant examples of the actual exercise of such supernatural gifts within their own society. Thus, one person is cured of blindness ; another of dislocation of the thigh ; another has his fractured backbone restored ; in a fourth case it is a rupture that is healed ; in the fifth convulsive fits that are stopped.¹ I have myself been present at a Mormon meeting for public worship, and have heard the saints who were gathered together narrate, with perfect solemnity and apparent good faith, the miraculous cures which they had themselves experienced, or which they had personally witnessed. One after another rose to bear his testimony to some case of the kind which had fallen within his immediate knowledge. To these uncultivated and fanatical people, holy events still were what they have long ceased to be to the ordinary Christian world—living realities ; and we may still study in them the mental condition of those who could accept as phenomena occurring in their own day the restoration of sight, hearing, or speech ; the expulsion of devils ; and the resurrection of the dead.

¹ For the evidence of these miracles, see a paper by the author on "The Latter-day Saints," in the *Fortnightly Review* for December 1869.

CHAPTER II.

HOLY PLACES.

“DRAW not nigh hither,” said the occupant of the burning bush to Moses ; “put off thy shoes from off thy feet ; for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.”¹ This verse embodies the universal theory of holy places. They are spots occupied in a special and peculiar manner by the deity or his representative ; and where he finds it easier to communicate with mankind than it is elsewhere. Hence, those who hope or desire to receive some celestial intimation, resort to such holy places. The oracles of the ancient world, and the temple at Jerusalem, are instances of holy places where the respective gods worshipped by those who frequented them gave responses, or manifested their presence. Holy places are not always consecrated places. Sometimes—as in the case of the Delphian oracle—the consecration is the work of nature ; the divinity intimates in some unmistakable way his presence in the sanctuary which he has himself selected ; and human beings have nothing to do but humbly to receive such communications as he may desire to make. Frequently, however, holy places have only become holy by the act of consecration ; the local god has not occupied them until they have been duly pre-

¹ Exod. iii. 5.

pared for him by human labour. On the other hand, consecrated places are always holy places. Not indeed that there are always conspicuous intimations of the divine presence; but it is nevertheless vaguely supposed to haunt the buildings where worship is offered, and rites are performed, more than it does the outer world.

To begin with a few instances of holy places which have not undergone consecration. On the coast of Guinea "almost every village hath a small appropriated grove." Offerings are made in these groves, and they are regarded as so sacred that no one ventures to injure the trees by plucking, cutting, or breaking their branches. "Universal malediction" would be one of the consequences of such misconduct.¹ Mr Turner states that "as of old in Canaan, sacred *groves* for heathen worship, with and without temples, were quite common in the islands of the Pacific."² These are instances of the sacredness so frequently attached to woods and forests by primitive nations.

"The groves were God's first temples. Ere man learned
To hew the shaft, and lay the architrave,
And spread the roof above them; ere he framed
The lofty vault, to gather and roll back
The sound of anthems,—in the darkling wood,
Amidst the cool and silence he knelt down,
And offered to the Mightiest solemn thanks
And supplication."³

Natural characteristics in the same manner determine the quality of holiness attributed to certain spots by the natives of Africa. Holy places among them are those where a god dwells either visibly or invisibly; particular buildings, huts, or hills; or trees which are

¹ D. C. G., p. 128. ² N. Y., p. 329. ³ Bryant, a Forest Hymn.

remarkable for age, size, and strength. They have also sacred groves into which no negro, not being a priest, ventures to intrude. One of the tribes asserts that their god has his dwelling-place in the cavern of a rock that is situated in the bushes.¹

A singular example of a holy place in a more advanced religion is the neighbourhood of the Bo tree, or Bogaha tree, in Ceylon, under whose shade the people worship at the great festival. This tree derives its sanctity from the circumstance of its having sheltered Buddha at an eventful crisis of his life. Near it ninety kings are interred; huts are erected around it for the use of the devotees who repair to it; and as "every sort of uncleanness and dust must be removed from the sacred spot," the approaches are continually swept by persons appointed for the purpose. Besides the Bo tree, and the pagodas—or public temples—many of the Singhalese have private holy places in their own houses. They "build in their yards *private* chapels, which are little houses like to closets," and in these they place an image of the Buddha which they worship.²

Graves of the dead whom we have loved are apt to become holy places to us all; and in some religious creeds, such as those of Islam and Christianity, this veneration is extended to the tombs of persons who have been distinguished by their sanctity. Mussulmans "pray at the tomb of those they repute saints;" and expect, by offering vows at such places, to obtain "relief, through their saintly intercession, from sickness, misfortune, sterility, &c." Miracles take place at these tombs, and supernatural lights float over them.³

¹ G. d. M., p. 326.

² H. R. C., p. 73.

³ Dervishes, pp. 79, 80.

It is believed, too, that "the merits of the deceased will insure a favourable reception of the prayers which they offer up in such consecrated places."¹

Sometimes, again, the place where some striking event in the history of religion has occurred, acquires a holiness of its own. Thus the Scala Santa at Rome enjoys a pre-eminent holiness, possessing the merit of procuring a considerable remission of punishment for those who perform the task of ascending it on their knees.

The oracle of Clarius Apollo at Colophon, mentioned by Tacitus, is an example of a large and important class of holy places which were not consecrated places. Here it was not a woman, as at Delphi (observes Tacitus), who gave the responses; but a priest, who descended into a cavern, and drank water from a secret fountain.² In Jewish history we meet with a remarkable instance of a place originally hallowed by the actual appearance of God, in the case of Beth-el, "the house of God," where Jacob was favoured with his remarkable dream. "How dreadful is this place!" exclaimed the patriarch on waking; "this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven."³ In the spot whose holiness had thus been rendered manifest, Jacob proceeded to perform consecrating rites; but, contrary to the usual order, the holiness preceded and induced the consecration.

More generally, consecration forms a sort of invitation to the deity to inhabit the place which has thus been rendered suited to his abode. Of the holy places which are also consecrated, a conspicuous place is due to Solomon's temple; in the dedication of which the

¹ Dervishes, p. 272.

² Tac. Ann., ii. 54.

³ Gen. xxviii. 17.

theory just stated is clearly embodied. Solomon, or his historians, perceived the difficulty of causing a being so transcendently powerful as Jehovah to dwell within local limits. The monarch, in his consecrating prayer, explains that he is well aware that even the heaven of heavens cannot contain him; much less this house that he has built. Nevertheless, he cannot give up the notion that this house may, in some degree, be peculiarly favoured by having his especial attention directed towards it. His eyes at least may be open towards it, and if he cannot be there himself, his name may. Moreover, when prayers are offered in the temple, he may listen to them more graciously than to other supplications; and when the asseverations of contending parties are confirmed by oaths taken before the altar it contains, he may take unusual pains to execute justice between them. Jehovah fully approves of his servant's proposals. He emphatically declares in reply that he has hallowed this house which he has built, to put his name there for ever; and that his eyes and his heart shall be there perpetually.¹

Very primitive peoples hold similar views of the relation of their deities to their temples. Just as there was "an oracle" in the Jewish temple, where "the glory of the Lord filled the house of the Lord," as it had filled the corresponding place in the tabernacle, so in most of the Fijian temples there is "a shrine, where the god is supposed to descend when holding communication with the priests; and there is also a long piece of native cloth hung at one end of the building, and from the very ceiling, which is also

¹ 1 Kings viii. 22—ix. 3.

connected with the arrival and departure of the god invoked."¹ It seems to have been a general rule in the temples of these islands to have some object specially connected with the deity, and through which he might manifest his presence in the place. Thus, in one of them there was a conch shell, which "the god was supposed to blow when he wished the people to rise to war."² Nay, there was even an altar erected to Jehovah and Jesus Christ in one of the islands, "to which persons afflicted with all manner of diseases were brought to be healed; and so great was the reputation which this maræ obtained, that the power of Jehovah and Jesus Christ became great in the estimation of the people."³ Here an altar, erected of course by a man not yet converted to Christianity, received a blessing no less conspicuous than that granted in ancient times to Solomon's temple.

The Mexicans and Peruvians entertained a precisely similar belief to that which we have observed among the Fijians and the Hebrews. Father Acosta describes the ruins of a very large building in Peru which had been a place of worship, where immense plunder had been carried off by the Christians. In this temple there was a sure tradition that "the devil" had spoken, and given responses in his oracle. The fact of the devil speaking and answering in these false sanctuaries is, according to the learned father, a very common thing in America; but the father of lies has become silent since the sign of the cross has been raised in those regions of his previous power.⁴ Not only were the temples holy in Peru, but the whole of the impe-

¹ Viti, p. 393. ² N. Y., p. 240. ³ N. M. E., p. 28. ⁴ H. L., b. v. ch. 12.

rial city of Cozco, the residence of the Incas, enjoyed an exceptional holiness. So much was this the case, that if two natives of equal rank met one another on the road, the one coming from Cozco, and the other going to it, the one coming from it received respect and reverence from the one going to it, which was enhanced to a higher degree if he were a native of Cozco.¹ In approaching the great temple at Cozco, there were certain limits where all who passed were obliged to take off their shoes: the very same sign of regard for holy places which Moses was commanded to observe at the burning bush; which is practised by Parsee priests when ministering in their temples, and by Mussulmans in reference to their mosques.²

Prohibition to all but holy persons to enter holy places is not uncommon. The holy of holies in the Jewish temple might be entered by no one but the high priest, and the utmost horror was felt by the Jews at the violation of their sanctuary by Pompey. A European traveller in Africa, finding a grove with a mat hung before it, wished to enter; but was entreated not to do so by the negroes, who informed him that a great spirit, who might kill him if displeased, dwelt within. He, however, went in, and found a delightful place; this being one of those to which only priests were admitted.³ Similarly among the Parsees, the Atesch-gâh, or holy place where worship is performed, may be entered only by the priests, except under special circumstances, when laymen may enter it after due observance of preparatory rites, and with the face covered. Such a case would occur if there were no priest to

¹ C. R., b. iii. ch. 20.

² Ibid., b. iii. ch. 23.

³ G. d. M., p. 326.

keep up the sacred fire.¹ In Mexico, where there were two important holy places—the Cu, or great temple of Vitziliputzli, and the temple of Tezcatlipuca—the priests alone had the right of entry to this last.²

We thus find, among the several nations of the world, a consistent and all-pervading theory of holy places. These are not always the scenes of divine revelations, or of striking events produced by the divine agency ; but they are much more likely to be so favoured than other places, and if communications are distinctly sought, it must generally be by resorting to such local sanctuaries as are commonly reputed to be fitted for the purpose. Where no revelation is either given or expected, the holy place is yet the abiding home of the deity whose worship is celebrated within its enclosure. And although Christians may consider their God as present everywhere, yet they are conscious on entering a church, of coming, in a peculiar sense, into his presence ; and they indicate that consciousness by removing their hats, if men, and keeping the head covered, if women. For such is the outward indication of respect which the Christian God is supposed to require of those who set their feet within his holy places.

¹ Z. A., vol. ii. p. 569.

² H. I., b. 5, ch. 13.

CHAPTER III.

HOLY OBJECTS.

WHILE a highly-exalted conception of the First Cause of nature would see him equally in everything, and believe the whole world to be alike natural and divine, no actual religion, believed by any considerable number of persons, has ever reached so abstract an idea. To all of them some things are more sacred than others; in the more primitive forms of faith these things are either a species of divinities themselves, or they are the abode of some divinity; in the more advanced types, they are held to be sanctified by the power of God, or to be the earthly representatives of his invisible majesty. To the class of holy objects belong all charms, amulets, fetishes, sacred animals, and other things of whatever kind, which are believed in any country to possess a different order of powers from those which scientific investigation discovers in them.

The theory underlying the use of such objects among the negroes—and it is practically the same as that of more civilised nations—is well explained by a German missionary. “Fetishes, or Shambu,” according to him, “are holy things, which are supposed to have received a particular power from God, both to drive away evil spirits, as also to be useful in all illnesses and dangers, especially against sorcery.” They cover both them-

selves and their gods with fetishes. These descend from father to son, and are preserved with the greatest care. Some are kept in sanctuaries of their own. There exists among these negroes (the Mavu) a class of professional fetish-makers, who are mostly old women, and who wear a peculiar dress. A man, who had fetishes at the bottom of his staircase, informed the writer that their use was to keep the devil from getting into his house. Another tribe of negroes prefer to take things which have been struck by lightning for their fetishes : the lightning-stroke being, as the missionary justly concludes, an indication that a divine power has united itself to these objects.¹

The natives of Sierra Leone are described as placing unlimited faith in "griggories," or charms. These are made of goats' skin ; texts of the Koran are written upon them, and they are worn upon various parts of the person. They have distinct functions, each one being designed to preserve the wearer from a certain kind of evil or danger.²

Numerous objects were holy in Peru. Rivers, fountains, large stones, hills, the tops of the mountains, are mentioned by Acosta as having been adored by the Peruvians ; indeed, he says that they adored whatever natural object appeared very different from the rest, recognising therein some peculiar deity. A certain tree, for instance, which was cut down by the Spaniards, had long been an object of adoration to the Indians, on account of its antiquity and size.³ In another part of the American continent, the neighbourhood of Acadia, a traveller tells us of a venerable tree

¹ G. d. M., pp. 322, 323.
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² S. L., p. 132.

³ H. I., b. 5, ch. 5.
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which was likewise holy. Many marvels were recounted of it, and it was always loaded with offerings. The sea having washed the soil from about its roots, it maintained itself a long time "almost in the air," which confirmed the savages in their notion that it was "the seat of some great spirit;" and even after it had fallen, its branches, so long as they were visible above the surface of the water, continued to receive the worship of the people.¹

Not unfrequently the holy object is an animal, and then it may be regarded either as itself a god, or as sacred to some god, who either makes it in some sense his abode, or regards it with favour and takes it under his care. Among animals, there is none more frequently worshipped than the serpent; and it has been supposed, with some plausibility, that the Hebrew legend of the fall was directed against serpent-worship. However this may be, that worship is clearly discernible in the story of the brazen serpent which healed the sickness of the Israelites in the wilderness.² This would seem to be a dim tradition of a time at which the adoration of the serpent was still practised by the people of Jehovah. Many other countries afford examples of the same worship. To take a single case: the Chevalier des Marchais, who travelled in the last century, relates that serpents of a certain kind were worshipped in Guinea. There was one, however, which was called the father of these gods, and was reputed to be of prodigious size. It was kept in a place of its own, where it had "secret apartments," and none but the chief sacrificer was permitted to enter this holy of holies. The king himself

¹ N. F., vol. iii. p. 549.

² Num. xxi. 8.

might only see it once, when, three months after his coronation, he went to present his offerings.¹

Even Christianity did not entirely put an end to the worship of the serpent; for an early Christian writer, in a treatise against all heresies, makes mention of a sect of Ophites who (he says) “magnify the serpent to such a degree, that they prefer him even to Christ himself; for it was he, they say, who gave us the origin of the knowledge of good and evil. His power and majesty (they say) Moses perceiving, set up the brazen serpent; and whoever gazed upon him obtained health. Christ himself (they say further) imitates Moses’ serpent’s sacred power in saying: ‘And as Moses upreared the serpent in the desert, so it behoveth the Son of man to be upreared.’ Him they introduce to bless their eucharistic [elements].”²

Holy objects are very often connected with some eminent man, from whose relation to them they derive their sanctity. Such are all the innumerable relics of saints to which so much importance is attached in Catholic countries. Such is that pre-eminently sacred relic, the tooth of Buddha, so carefully preserved and guarded in Ceylon. When Major Forbes witnessed the tooth festival at Kandy, fifty-three years had passed since the last exhibition of this deeply revered member of the founder of the faith. It was kept in its temple within six cases; of which the three larger ones having been first removed, the three inner ones, containing it, were placed “on the back of an elephant richly caparisoned.” It was shown to the people on a temporary altar, surrounded with rich hangings; the festival being attended by crowds of pious worshippers,

¹ V. G., vol. ii. p. 169.

² Adv. omn. hæreses., II. --A. F. L., vol. 18, p. 262.

who thought that the privilege of seeing the tooth, so rarely exhibited to the public, was a sufficient proof of the merits they had obtained in former lives.¹

Mussulmans have their holy objects, consisting of verses of the Koran, suspended or written on their dwellings, which are supposed to ensure their protection. Such verses, or short Suras, are sometimes carried on the person engraved on stones.²

Conspicuous among holy objects for the extraordinary virtues ascribed to them, are the bread and wine of the Lord's supper. These are believed by Christians either to be or to represent (according to their several doctrines) the actual flesh and blood of Jesus; and the mere fact of eating and drinking them, in faith, is held to exercise a mystic efficacy over the life of the communicant. A more singular instance of the holiness attributed by an act of the imagination to material things can scarcely be produced. Another curious case of the same notion is the belief in holy water; which enjoys so great a power, that some drops of it dashed upon an infant's forehead contribute to ensure its eternal happiness; while it has also the gift of conferring some kind of advantage upon the worshippers who, on entering a church, sprinkle it upon their persons.

Images of the gods or saints worshipped in a country form a large and important class of holy objects. Such were the "teraphim" or "gods" stolen by Rachel from her father, and which she concealed in the furniture of her camel.³ Similar images are employed by the Tartars, who place them at the heads and feet of their beds in certain fixed positions, and who carry them about with them wherever they go.⁴

¹ E. Y., vol. i. p. 290-293.

² Dervishes, p. 313.

³ Gen. xxxi. 19, 30-35.

⁴ Bergeron, Voyage de Rubruquis, ch. 3, p. 9.

CHAPTER IV.

HOLY ORDERS.

RITES, acts of worship and sacrifices, originally performed by each individual at his own discretion, or by each household in its own way, fall (as we have seen) with advancing development into the hands of professional persons consecrated for this especial purpose. Very great importance attaches to these consecrated persons. The place they occupy in all societies above the level of barbarism is one of peculiar honour; and their influence on the course of human history has in all ages with which that history is acquainted been conspicuous and profound. Once devoted to their religious duties, they become the authorised representatives of deity on earth. In treating of their consecration, we considered them as channels of communication from earth to heaven; we have now to consider them as channels of communication from heaven to earth.

Endowed by the general wish of all human society with a special right to convey their petitions to the divine beings whom they worship, they do not fail to claim for themselves the correlative right of conveying to men the commands, the intentions, the reproofs, and the desires of these divine beings. It is the priests alone who can pretend to know their minds.

It is the priests alone who can correctly interpret their often enigmatic language. It is the priests alone through whom they generally deign to converse with mortals.

Such is the ecclesiastical theory throughout the world ; and it is as a general rule accepted by the communities for whose guidance it is constructed. Exceptions do indeed present themselves, above all in the case of the remarkable men whose careers we shall deal with in the ensuing chapter, who have founded new religions independently of, or even in spite of, very powerful existing priesthoods. And, speaking generally, the holy class is not always co-extensive with the consecrated class. We shall notice further on an important order among the Jews who were universally received as holy, without being consecrated. Moreover, there has often existed a species of men who, without regular consecration, have nevertheless served as a channel of communication from God or from inferior spirits to man. Such were magicians, astrologers, "*et hoc genus omne*," in ancient times ; such are the so-called mediums in the present day. Conversely, consecration, though by its very nature implying holiness as its correlative, implies it less and less as we rise in the scale of culture. Thus, in the more advanced forms of Protestantism, such as the Presbyterian or the Unitarian, the minister is scarcely more than a mere teacher ; he has little or no more power to convey commands or intimations from God than any member of his congregation. So that we should have a rough approximation to the truth were we to say that in the lower grades of religious culture we have holy orders without consecration ; while in

the higher grades we have consecrated orders without holiness.

Between these extremes there lies the great body of regular and qualified priests, appointed to communicate upwards, and entitled to communicate downwards. Invasions of their authority by irregular pretenders are the exceptions, not the rule. It is the usual order of things, that the decisions of priests on matters pertaining to religion should be accepted in submissive faith, by the societies to which they belong. Where, as in the case of Jesus of Nazareth, some bold individual brushes aside successfully the pretensions of ecclesiastical castes, the theory is only modified to suit the individual instance. Ecclesiastical castes, deriving their title from the innovator himself, spring up again at once ; and differ only in so far as the God whose will they expound is either another God, or a new modification of the same God.

Numerous privileges are generally accorded to priests. Sometimes they enjoy exemptions from the operation of the ordinary laws ; sometimes they are permitted a disproportionate share in the government of their country ; sometimes, without possessing recognised legislative powers, they control the destinies of nations by the expression of their views. Often, the whole physical force of the government is at their disposal, for the propagation and support of the system they uphold ; occasionally, when their authority has reached its highest point, the mere solemn declaration of their commands is enough to ensure the acquiescence of monarchs and the obedience of their subjects. Corresponding to these considerable rights, they perform a considerable variety of functions, which are

regarded by the societies who employ them as not only useful, but indispensable. We find them in all primitive communities acting as the recognised doctors of the people, treating their diseases by the method of supernatural inspiration. Rising a little higher, they predict that class of events which is so interesting to each individual, namely, the prospects of his or her life. In other words, they become fortune-tellers, astrologers, or (by whatever means) readers of the future. Or they control the weather, calling down from heaven the needful rain. They are inspired by the deity in whose service they are enrolled, and they announce his will. In his name they threaten evil-doers with punishment, and promise rewards to the faithful and obedient. Benefits from on high are declared to be the lot of those who pay them honour. They proclaim the fact that their presence is essential to the performance of important rites, and that their assistance at these must be duly rewarded. Sometimes they are in possession of knowledge which is only permitted to be imparted to their own caste. They are at all times the authorised expositors of theological dogma, and the authorised guardians of public ritual.

Let us enter on a more detailed account of these several characteristics of the priestly order.

First, it has to be noted that the differentiation of this order from the rest of society is in primitive communities very incomplete. Fathers of families, or any venerable and respected men, act as priests, and perform the requirements of divine worship according to their own notions of propriety. Thus in Samoa, Mr Turner tells us that "the father of the family was *the high-priest*, and usually offered a

short prayer at the evening meal, that they might all be kept from fines, sickness, war, and death." He also directed on what occasions religious festivals should be held, and it was supposed that the god sometimes spoke through the father or another member of the family.¹ So in the early period of the history of the Israelites, there was no formal and regular priesthood, and no established ritual. The Levites were not devoted to the functions they subsequently discharged, until, in the course of the Exodus, they had proved their qualification by the holy zeal with which they slaughtered their brethren. It was for the perpetration of this massacre that they were promised by Moses the blessing of God.² With advancing culture, the necessity for separating priests from laymen is always felt. The ministrations of unskilled hands are not held to be sufficient. Ritual grows fixed; and for a fixed ritual there must be a special apprenticeship. Ceremonies multiply; and the original family prayer having grown into a more elaborate system of worship, takes more time, and demands the attention of a class who make this, and kindred matters, their exclusive occupation.

While, however, the ministers of the gods are thus differentiated from the people at large, they are not differentiated until a later stage from the ministers of the human body. Medicine and priestcraft are for a long time united arts. On this connection, Brinton very justly remarks, that "when sickness is looked upon as the effect of the anger of a god, or as the malicious infliction of a sorcerer, it is natural to seek help from those who assume to control the unseen

¹ N. Y., p. 239.

² Exod. xxxii. 25-29.

world, and influence the fiats of the Almighty."¹ Thus in America the native priests were called by the European colonists, "medicine men." The New Zealand priests were "expert jugglers," and when called in to the sick would ascribe some diseases to a piece of wood lodged in the stomach; this they pretended to extract, and produced it in evidence of their assertion. An acquaintance of the author from whom I borrow this fact, saw one of these doctors tear open the leg of a rheumatic patient, and (apparently) take out of it a knotted piece of wood.² In the Fiji islands they occasionally use their medical powers malevolently, instead of benevolently. In Tanna, there was a class of men termed "disease-makers," and greatly dreaded by the people, who thought that these men could exercise the power of life and death, the calamity of death being the result of burning rubbish belonging to the sufferer. When a Tannese was ill, he believed that the disease-maker was burning his rubbish, and would send large presents to induce him to stop; for if it were all burned he would die.³ The Samoans believed disease to be a result of divine wrath, and sought its remedy at the hands of the high-priest of the village. Whatever he might demand was given; in some cases, however, he did not ask for anything, but merely commanded the family of the patient to "confess, and throw out." Confessing, and throwing out, consisted of a statement by each member of the family of the crimes he had committed, or of the evil he had invoked on the patient or his connections, accompanied by the ceremony of spurning out water

¹ M. N. W., p. 264.² N. Z., p. 80.³ N. Y., p. 89-91.

from the mouth towards him.¹ Like the Fijians, the natives of Australia employ priests to cure their illnesses. Their ecclesiastical practitioners “perform incantations over the sick,” and also pretend to suck out the disease, producing a piece of bone which they assert to be its cause.² The Africans have an exactly similar belief in the influence of fetish over disease. Reade observes that epileptic attacks are (as is natural from their mysterious character) ascribed to demoniacal possession, and that fetish-men are called in to cure them. This they attempt to accomplish by elaborate dances and festivities, “at the expense of the next of kin,” which sometimes end in driving the patient into the bush in a state of complete insanity. When cured, he “builds a little fetish-house, avoids certain kinds of food, and performs certain duties.”³ The negroes on the coast of Guinea, when ill, apply to their priest, who informs them what offerings are required to ensure their recovery.⁴ When an Amazulu is troubled by bad dreams, he applies to a diviner, who recommends certain ceremonies by which the spirit causing the dreams is supposed to be banished. Should he be ill, his friends apply to the diviner, who discovers the source of the illness, and probably demands the sacrifice of a bullock. A remarkable sensitiveness about the shoulders indicates the spiritual character of the doctor. If he fail to remove disease, he is said to have no “Itongo,” or spirit, in him.⁵ The Fida negroes sent to consult their divine snake through a priest when ill, and

¹ N. Y., p. 224.

³ S. A., p. 251.

² S. L. A., p. 226.

⁴ D. C. G., p. 213.

⁵ R. S. A., pt. ii. pp. 159, 160, 172.

the priest (unless he announced that the disease would be fatal) received a reward for indicating the remedies to be used. Moreover, the priests were the physicians of the negroes. Two theories prevailed among the people as to the origin of illnesses. Some tribes held them to be due to evil spirits, who were accordingly driven away by a prescribed system of armed pursuit. But the priests in other places regarded them as a consequence of discord between spirit and soul, and required the patient in the first instance to confess his sins. This being done, they obtained from their deity an indication of the offerings to be made, or the vows to be fulfilled, to restore mental harmony. They then undertook the treatment of the body by physical means.¹ In Sierra Leone, as in other parts of Africa, "the practice of medicine, and the art of making greegrees and fetishes, in other words, amulets is generally the province of the same person." Those who practise medicine are looked upon as witches, and believed not only to converse with evil spirits, but to exercise control over them.² In New France, in the eighteenth century, the principal occupation of the native priests was medicine.³ In Mexico, the people came from all parts to the priests to be anointed with the peculiar unguent used in the special consecration mentioned above.⁴ This they termed a "divine physic," and considered as a cure for their diseases.⁵

Such rude notions as these, implying a supernatural as opposed to a natural theory of the physical conditions

¹ G. d. M., pp. 335. 336.

³ N. F., vol. iii. p. 364.

² N. A., vol. i. p. 251.

⁴ *Supra*, p. 116.

⁵ II. I., b. 5 ch. 26.

of the body, are not wholly extinct even among ourselves. They exist, like so many of the crude conceptions of the savage, in the form of respected survivals wholly inconsistent with our practical habits. True, we do not call in the clergyman to assist or to direct at the sick-bed. But we do ask him to put up prayers for the recovery of the sick ; and in the case of royal princes, the clergy throughout the land are set to work to induce the divine Being to give their illnesses a favourable turn. Now, this proceeding, however disguised under refined and imposing forms, is practically on a level with that of the Amazulu, who seeks to pacify the offended spirit that has attacked him with pain by the sacrifice of a bullock ; or with that of the Fijian who, when his friend is ill, blows a shell for hours as a call to the disease-maker to stop burning the sick man's rubbish, and as a sign that presents will speedily reach his hands. Nay, the very missionary who relates this Fiji custom gives at least one proof of his fitness to understand the native mind, in a passage showing that in reference to beliefs like these his own was almost on a par with it. A war, of which the missionaries disapproved, had been going on for four months, "and the end of it was, the war was raised against ourselves. After they had been fighting for months among themselves, contrary to all our entreaties, God commenced to punish them with a deadly epidemic in the form of dysentery." Now, the conviction that diseases are punishments sent by some god, or at any rate direct results of an intention on the part of some god to harm the sufferer, is at the root of the priestly, as opposed to the scientific, treatment. For if God punishes with a deadly epidemic, it is an

obvious inference that the mode of cure and of prevention is not to take physical remedies, and observe physical precautions, but to avoid the sin for which the punishment is given. And this is the common conclusion of the savage and the Christian, though the superior information of the Christian renders his conduct self-contradictory and confused, where that of the savage is logical and simple.

Nearly related to the supposed influence of priests over physical suffering, is their supposed power to foretell the future. Here, however, a number of unauthorised and schismatic priesthoods often enter into competition with those sanctioned by the state. Technically, they would not be termed priests at all; but tested by the true mark of priesthood, the gift, alleged by themselves and admitted by others, of forming channels of communication from the celestial powers to man, they are entitled to that name, and this although they may perhaps receive no regular consecration to their office. The Roman Senate during the Empire came into frequent collision with these irregular priests. It endeavoured from time to time to combat the growing belief in the unorthodox practices of astrologers and magi, by decreeing their expulsion from Italy, and occasionally by visiting some of them with severer penalties; but such endeavours to stem the tide of popular superstition are naturally useless.¹ Magic of some description is universal. In New Zealand the priest "seems to unite in his person the offices of priest, sorcerer, juggler, and physician." He predicts the life or death of members of his tribe.² By the Kafirs the prophet is consulted on all kinds of do-

¹ Tac. Ann., ii. 32 ; xii. 52.

² N. Z., p. 80.

mestic occasions, and (while the people beat the ground in assent to what he says) he is held to see in a vision the event which has led to the consultation.¹ The inhabitants of Sierra Leone have other methods of divining. Their diviners make dots and lines in sand spread upon a goat's skin, which dots and lines they afterwards decipher; or they place palm-nuts in heaps upon a goat's skin, and by shifting them about suppose that an answer is obtained.² The heathen Mexican had the habit, on the birth of a child, of consulting a diviner in order to ascertain its future. The diviner, having learnt from the child's parents the hour at which it was born, turned over his books to discover the sign under which its nativity had occurred. Should that sign prove to be favourable, he would say to the parents: "Your child has been born under a good sign; it will be a señor, or senator, or rich, or brave," or will have some other distinction. In the opposite case he would say: "The child has not been born under a good sign; it has been born under a disastrous sign." In some circumstances there was hope that the evil might be remedied; but if the sign were altogether bad, they would predict that it would be vicious, carnal, and a thief; or that it would be dull and lazy; or possibly that it would be a great drunkard; or that its life would be short. A third alternative was when the sign was indifferent, and the expected fortune was therefore partly good and partly bad. The diviner, in this case and in that of a bad, but not hopelessly bad, sign, assisted the parents by pointing out an auspicious day for the baptism of the infant.³

¹ K. N., p. 167 ff.

² N. A., vol. i. p. 134.

³ A. M., vol. v. pp. 479, 480.

Prediction of coming events was practised by the priests in North America, as it was elsewhere. They persuaded the multitude, says Charlevoix, that they suffered from ecstatic transports. During these conditions, they said that their spirits gave them a large acquaintance with remote things, and with the future.¹ Moreover, they practised magic, and with such effect that Charlevoix felt himself compelled to ascribe their performances to their alliance with the devil. They even pretended to be born in a supernatural manner, and found believers ready to think that only by some sort of enchantment and illusion had they formerly imagined that they had come into the world like other people. When they went into the state of ecstasy, they resembled the Pythoness on the tripod; they assumed tones of voice and performed actions which seemed beyond human capacity. On these occasions they suffered so much that it was hard to induce them, even by handsome payment, thus to yield themselves to the spirit. So often did they prophesy truly, that Charlevoix can only resort again to his hypothesis of a real intercourse between them and the "father of seduction and of lies," who manifested his connection with them by telling them the truth. Thus, a lady named Madame de Marson, by no means an "esprit faible," was anxious about her husband, who was commanding at a French outpost in Acadia, and who had stayed away beyond the time fixed for his return. A native woman, having ascertained the reason of her trouble, told her not to be distressed, for that her husband would return on a certain day at a certain hour, wearing a grey hat. Seeing that the lady did

¹ N. F., vol. iii. p. 347.

not believe in her, she returned on the day and at the hour named, and asked her if she would not come to meet her husband. After much pressing, she induced the lady to accompany her to the bank of the river. Scarcely had they arrived, when M. de Marson appeared in a canoe, wearing a grey hat upon his head. The writer was informed of this fact by Madame de Marson's son-in-law, at that time Governor-General of the French dominions in America, who had heard it from herself.¹ The priests of the 'Tartars are also their diviners. They predict eclipses, and announce lucky and unlucky days for all sorts of business.²

Among the Buddhist priesthood of Thibet, there is a class of Lamas who are astrologers, distinguished by a peculiar dress, and making it their business to tell fortunes, exorcise evil spirits, and so forth. The astrologers "are considered to have intercourse with Sadag," a spirit who is supposed to be "lord of the ground" in which bodies are interred, and who, along with other spirits, requires to be pacified by charms and rites known only to these priests. To prevent them from injuring the dead, the relations offer a price in cattle or money to Sadag; and the astrologers, when satisfied with the amount, undertake the necessary conjuration.³

In the Old Testament, this class of unofficial priests is mentioned with the reprobation inspired by rivalry. The Hebrew legislator is at one with the Roman Senate in his desire to expel them from the land. "There shall not be found among you any one that . . . useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, or a charmer, or a consulter

¹ N. F., vol. iii. p. 359-363.

² Bergeron, *Voyage de Rubruquis*, ch. 47. ³ B. T., pp. 156, 271.

with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer. For all that do these things are an abomination unto the Lord: and because of these abominations the Lord thy God doth drive them out from before thee.”¹ The very prohibition evinces the existence of the objects against whom it is aimed; and proves that, along with the recognised worship of Jehovah, there existed an unrecognised resort to practices which the sterner adherents of that worship would not permit.

In addition to their claim to be in possession of special means of ascertaining the occult causes of phenomena (as in illness), and of special contrivances for penetrating the future (as in astrology or fortune-telling), priesthoods pretend to a more direct inspiration from on high, qualifying them either to announce the will of their god on exceptional occasions, or to intimate his purpose in matters of more ordinary occurrence. This inspiration was granted to the native North American priests at the critical age of puberty. “It was revealed to its possessor by the character of the visions he perceived at the ordeal he passed through on arriving at puberty; and by the northern nations was said to be the manifestation of a more potent personal spirit than ordinary. It was not a faculty, but an inspiration; not an inborn strength, but a spiritual gift.”² So in India; among the several meanings of the word Brahman, is that of a person “elected by special divine favour to receive the gift of inspiration.”³ The missionary Turner, who has an eye for parallels, observes, among other just reflections, that “the way in which the Samoan

¹ Deut. xviii. 10-12. ² M. N. W., p. 279. ³ O. S. T., vol. i. p. 259.

priests declared that the gods spoke by them, strikingly reminds us of the mode by which God of old made known his will to man by the Hebrew prophets.”¹ Although the Levites were said to be the Lord’s, and to have been hallowed by him instead of all the first-born of Israel, yet it does not appear that they were in general endowed with any high order of inspiration. The high-priest no doubt received communications from God by the Urim and Thummim. Priests were also the judges whom the Lord chose, and whose sentence in court was to be obeyed on penalty of death ; but the inspiration that was fitted to guide the Israelites was supplied not so much by them as by the prophets, a kind of supplementary priesthood of which the members, sometimes priests, sometimes consecrated by other prophets, were as a rule unconsecrated, deriving their appointment directly from Jehovah. While, therefore, it was attained in a somewhat unusual way, the general need of an inspired order was supplied no less perfectly among the Israelites than elsewhere. Christian priests enjoy two kinds of inspiration. In the first place, they are inspired specially when assembled in general councils, to declare the truth in matters of doctrine, or in other words, to issue supplementary revelations ; in the second place, they are inspired generally to remit or retain offences, their sentence being—according to the common doctrine of Catholics and Episcopalian Protestants—always ratified in the Court above.

Consistently with this exalted conception of their authority, priestly orders threaten punishment to

¹ N. Y., p. 349.

offenders, and announce the future destiny of souls. Thus the Mexican priests warned their penitents after confession not to fall again into sin, holding out the prospect of the torments of hell if they should neglect the admonition.¹ The priests in some parts of Africa know the fate of each soul after death, and can say whether it has gone to God or to the evil spirit.²

Sometimes the priests are held to be protected against injury by the especial care of heaven. To take away a Brahman's wife is an offence involving terrible calamities, while kings who restore her to the Brahman enjoy "the abundance of the earth."³ A king who should eat a Brahman's cow is warned in solemn language of the dreadful consequences of such conduct, both in this world and the next.⁴ The sacred volumes declare that "whenever a king, fancying himself mighty, seeks to devour a Brahman, that kingdom is broken up, in which a Brahman is oppressed."⁵ "No one who has eaten a Brahman's cow continues to watch (*i.e.*, to rule) over a country." The Indian gods, moreover, "do not eat the food offered by a king who has no . . . Purohita," or domestic chaplain.⁶ The murder of a king who had honoured and enriched the Buddhist priesthood, is said to have entailed the destruction of the power and strength of the kingdom of Thibet, and to have extinguished the happiness and welfare of its people.⁷ And Jewish history affords abundant instances of the manner in which the success or glory of the rulers was connected, by the sacerdotal class, with the respect shown

¹ A. M., vol. v. p. 370.

² G. d. M., p. 335.

³ O. S. T., vol. i. p. 257.

⁴ Ibid., vol. i. p. 285.

⁵ Ibid., vol. i. p. 287.

⁶ A. B., p. 528.

⁷ G. O. M., p. 362.

towards themselves as the ministers of Jehovah, and with the rigour evinced in persecuting or putting down the ministers of every other creed. That the same bias has been betrayed by the Christian priesthood and their adherents in the interpretation of history needs no proof.

The presence of a priest or priests at important rites is held to be indispensable by all religions. With the negroes visited by Oldendorp, the priest was in requisition at burials; for he only could help the soul to get to God, and keep off the evil spirit who would seek to obtain possession of it.¹ "For most of the ceremonies" (in Thibet) "the performance by a Lama is considered indispensable to its due effect;" and even where this is not so, the efficacy of the rite is increased by the Lama's assistance.² Much the same thing may be said here. For certain ceremonies, such as confirmation, the administration of the sacrament, the conduct of divine service on Sundays, the priest is a necessary official. For others, such as marriage, the majority of the people prefer to employ him, and no doubt believe that "the efficacy of the rite is increased" by the fact that he reads the words of the service. Nor is this surprising when we consider that, until within very recent times, no legitimate child could be produced in England without the assistance of a priest.

Not only is the ecclesiastical caste required to render religious rites acceptable to the deity, but they are often endowed with the attribute of ability to modify the course of nature. In Tanna, one of the Fiji group, "there are rain-makers and thunder-makers,

¹ G. d. M., p. 327.

² B. T., p. 247.

and fly and musquito makers, and a host of other 'sacred men ;'" and in another island "there is a rain-making class of priests."¹ In Christian countries all priests are rain-makers, the reading of prayers for fine or wet weather being a portion of their established duties.

Naturally, the members of a class whose functions are of this high value to the community enjoy great power, are regarded as extremely sacred, and above all, are well rewarded. First, as to the power they enjoy. This is accorded to them alike by savage tribes and by cultivated Europeans. According to Brinton, all North American tribes "appear to have been controlled" by secret societies of priests. "Withal," says the same authority, "there was no class of persons who so widely and deeply influenced the culture, and shaped the destiny of the Indian tribes, as their priests."² Over the negroes of the Caribbean Islands the priests and priestesses exercised an almost unlimited dominion, being regarded with the greatest reverence. No negro would have ventured to transgress the arrangements made by a priest.³ On the coast of Guinea there exists, or existed, an institution by which certain women became priestesses; and such women, even though slaves before, enjoyed, on receiving this dignity, a high position and even exercised absolute authority precisely in the quarter where it must have been sweetest to their minds, namely, over their husbands.⁴ Writing of the Talapoins in Siam, Gervaise says, that they are exempted from all public charges; they salute nobody, while everybody prostrates himself before

¹ N. Y., pp. 89, 428.

² M. N. W. p. 285.

³ G. d. M., p. 327.

⁴ D. C. G., p. 363.

them ; they are maintained at the public expense, and so forth.¹ Of the enormous power wielded by the clerical order in Europe, especially during the Middle Ages, it is unnecessary to speak. The humiliation of Theodosius by Ambrose was one of the most conspicuous, as it was one of the most beneficent, exercises of their extensive rights.

Secondly, the sanctity attached to their persons is usually considerable, and may often, to ambitious minds, afford a large compensation for the loss (if such be required) of some kinds of secular enjoyment. The African priestesses just mentioned are “as much respected as the priests, or rather more,” and call themselves by the appellation of “God’s children.” When certain Buddhist ecclesiastics were executed for rebellion in Ceylon, the utmost astonishment was expressed by the people at the temerity of the king in so treating “such holy and reverend persons. And none heretofore,” adds the reporter of the fact, “have been so served ; being reputed and called *sons of Boddon*,”² or Buddha ; a title exactly corresponding to that of God’s children bestowed upon the priestesses. In Siam the “Talapoins,” or priests, are of two kinds : secular, living in the world ; and regular, living in the forest without intercourse with men. There is no limit to the veneration given by the Siamese to these last, whom they look upon as demigods.³ “The Brahman caste,” according to the sacred books of the Hindus, “is sprung from the gods ;”⁴ and the exceptional honour always accorded to them is in harmony with

¹ H. N. S., troisième partie, chs. 5, 6.

² H. R. C., p. 75.

³ H. N. S., troisième partie, p. 184.

⁴ O. S. T., vol. i. p. 21.

this theory of their origin. The title "Reverend," man to be revered, given to the clergy in Europe, implies the existence, at least originally, of a similar sentiment of respect.

Lastly, the services of priests are generally well rewarded, and they themselves take every care to encourage liberality towards their order. Payment is made to them either in the shape of direct remuneration, or in that of exceptional pecuniary privileges, or in that of exemption from burdens. Direct remuneration may be, and often is, given in the shape of a fixed portion abstracted from the property of the laity for the benefit of the clergy. Such are the tithes bestowed by law upon the latter among the Jews, the Parsees, and the Christians. Or, direct remuneration may consist in fees for services rendered, and in voluntary gifts. Such fees and gifts are always represented by the priesthood as highly advantageous to the givers. If the relatives of a deceased Parsee do not give the priest who officiates at the funeral four new robes, the dead will appear naked before the throne of God at the resurrection, and will be put to shame before the whole assembly.¹ Moreover, those Parsees who wish to live happily, and have children who will do them honour, must pay four priests, who during three days and three nights perform the Yasna for them.² In Thibet there is great merit in consecrating a domestic animal to a certain god, the animal being after a certain time "delivered to the Lamas, who may eat it."³ Giving alms to the monks is a duty most sedulously inculcated by Buddhism, and

¹ Av., vol. ii. p. xli. ; iii. p. xliv.

² Z. A., vol. ii. p. 564.

³ B. T., p. 158.

the Buddhist writings abound in illustrations of the advantages derived from the practice. Similar benefits accrue to the clergy from the custom, prevailing in Ceylon, of making offerings in the temples for recovery from sickness ; for when the Singhalese have left their gift on the altar, "the priest presents it with all due ceremony to the god ; and after its purpose is thus served, very prudently converts it to his own use."¹ Of the Levites it is solemnly declared in Deuteronomy that they have "no part nor inheritances with Israel," and that "the Lord is their inheritance." But "the Lord" is soon seen to be a very substantial inheritance indeed. From those that offer an ox or a sheep the priests are to receive "the shoulder, the two cheeks, and the maw ;" while the firstfruits of corn, wine, and oil, and the first of the sheep's fleeces are to be given to them.² Moreover, giving to the priest is declared to be the same thing as giving to the Lord.³ A similar notion, always fostered by ecclesiastical influence, has led to the vast endowments bestowed by pious monarchs and wealthy individuals upon the Christian clergy.

Occasionally, the priests enjoy exemptions from the taxes, or other burdens levied upon ordinary people. A singular instance of this is found in the privilege of the Parsee priests, of not paying their doctors.⁴ Large immunities used to be enjoyed by ecclesiastics among ourselves, especially that of exemption from the jurisdiction of the ordinary courts of law.

While the life of a priest often entails certain privations, he is nevertheless frequently sustained by the thought that there is merit in the sacrifices he makes.

¹ A. I. C., p. 205.

² Deut. xviii. 1-5.

³ Num. v. 8.

⁴ Z. A., vol. ii. p. 555.

Thus, it is held by a Buddhist authority, that the merit obtained by entering the spiritual order is very great; and that his merit is immeasurable who either permits a son, a daughter, or a slave, to enter it, or enters it himself.¹

Priesthoods may either be hereditary or selected. The Brahmans in India, and the Levites in Judæa, are remarkable types of hereditary, the Buddhist and the Christian clergy of selected, sacerdotal orders. Curious modifications of the hereditary principle were found among the American Indians. Thus, "among the Nez Percés of Oregon," the priestly office "was transmitted in one family from father to son and daughter, but always with the proviso that the children at the proper age reported dreams of a satisfactory character." The Shawnees "confined it to one *totem*;" but just as the Hebrew prophets need not be Levites, "the greatest of their prophets . . . was not a member of this clan." The Cherokees "had one family set apart for the priestly office," and when they "abused their birthright" and were all massacred, another family took their places. With another tribe, the Choctaws, the office of high-priest remained in one family, passing from father to son; "and the very influential piaches of the Carib tribes very generally transmitted their rank and position to their children." A more important case of hereditary priesthood is that of the Incas of Peru, who monopolised the highest offices both in Church and State. "In ancient Anahuac" there existed a double system of inheritance and selection. The priests of Huitzilopochtli, "and perhaps a few other gods," were

¹ W. u. T., p. 107.

hereditary ; and the high-priest of that god, towards whom the whole order was required to observe implicit obedience, was the "hereditary pontifex maximus." But the rest were dedicated to ecclesiastical life from early childhood, and were carefully educated for the profession.¹

Christianity entirely abandoned the hereditary principle prevalent among its spiritual ancestors, the Jews, and selected for its ministers of religion those who felt, or professed to feel, an internal vocation for this career. Doubtless this is the most effectual plan for securing a powerful priesthood. Those who belong to it have their heart far more thoroughly in their work than can possibly be the case when it falls to them by right of birth. Just the most priestly-minded of the community become priests ; and a far greater air of zeal and of sanctity attaches to an order thus maintained, than to one of which many of the members possess no qualification but that of family, tribe, or caste.

Nothing can be more irrational than the denunciation of priests and priestcraft which is often indulged in by Liberal writers and politicians. If it be true that priests have shown considerable cunning, it is also true that the people have fostered that cunning by credulity. And if the clergy have put forth very large pretensions to inspiration, divine authority, and hidden knowledge, it is equally the fact that the laity have demanded such qualifications at their hands. An order can scarcely be blamed if it seeks to satisfy the claims which the popular religion makes upon it. Enlightenment from heaven has in all ages and countries been

¹ M. N. W., p. 281-283.

positively demanded. Sacrifices have always had to be made ; and when it was found more convenient to delegate the function of offering them to a class apart, that class naturally established ritualistic rules of their own, and as naturally asserted (and no doubt believed) that all sacrifices not offered according to these rules were displeasing to God. And they could not profess the inspiration which they were expected to manifest without also requiring obedience to divine commands. Priests are, in fact, the mere outcome of religious belief as it commonly exists ; and partly minister to that belief by deliberate trickery, partly share it themselves, and honestly accept the accredited view of their own lofty commission.

Divine inspiration leads by a very logical process to infallibility. A Church founded on revelation needs living teachers to preserve the correct interpretation of that revelation. Without such living teachers, revealed truth itself becomes (as it always has done among Protestants) an occasion of discord and of schism. But the interpreters of revelation in their turn must be able to appeal to some sole and supreme authority, as the arbiter between varying opinions, and the guide to be followed through all the intricacies of dogma. Nowhere can such an arbiter and such a guide be found more naturally than in the head of the Church himself. If God speaks to mankind through his Church, it is only a logical conclusion that within that Church there must be one through whom he speaks with absolute certainty, and whose prophetic voice must therefore be infallible. There cannot be a more consistent application of the general theory of priesthood ; and there is no more fatal sign

for the prospects of Christianity than the inability of many of its supporters to accept so useful a doctrine, and the thoughtless indignation of some among them against the single Church which has had the wisdom to proclaim it.

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CHAPTER V.

HOLY PERSONS.

ALTHOUGH for the ordinary and regular communications from the divine Being to man the established priest-hoods might suffice, yet occasions arise when there is need of a plenipotentiary with higher authority and more extensive powers. What is required of these exceptional ambassadors is not merely to repeat the doctrines of the old religion, but to establish a new one. In other words, they are the original founders of the great religions of the world. Of such founders there is but a very limited number.

Beginning with China, and proceeding from East to West, we find six :—

1. CONFUCIUS, or KHUNG-FU-TSZE, the founder of Confucianism.
2. LAÒ-TSÈ, the founder of Taouism.
3. SAKYAMUNI, or GAUTAMA BUDDHA, the founder of Buddhism.
4. ZARATHUSTRA, or ZOROASTER, the founder of Parsecism.
5. MOHAMMED, or MAHOMET, the founder of Islamism.
6. JESUS CHRIST, the founder of Christianity.

All these men, whom for convenience' sake I propose

to call *prophets*, occupy an entirely exceptional position in the history of the human race. The characteristics, or marks, by which they may be distinguished from other great men, are partly external, belonging to the views of others about them ; partly internal, belonging to their own view about themselves.

1. The first external mark by which they are distinguished is, that within his own religion each of these is recognised as the highest known authority. They alone are thought of as having the right to change what is established. While all other teachers appeal to them for the sanction of their doctrines, there is no appeal from them to any one beyond. What they have said is final. They are in perfect possession of the truth. Others are in possession of it only in so far as they agree with them. No doubt, the sacred books are equally infallible with the prophets ; but the sacred books of religions founded by prophets derive their authority in the last resort from them, and are always held to be only a written statement of their teaching. Thus, the sacred books of China are partly of direct Confucian authorship ; partly by others who recognise him as their head. The only sacred book of the Tað-ssé is by their founder himself. The sacred books of the Buddhists are supposed discourses of the Buddha. The Avesta is the reputed work of Zarathustra. The Koran is the actual work of Mahomet. And lastly, the New Testament is all of it written in express subordination to the authority of Christ, to which it constantly appeals. These books, then, are infallible, because they contain the doctrines of their founders.

The same thing is true where there is an infallible

Church. The Church never claims the same absolute authority as is claimed by its prophet. Its infallibility consists in its power to interpret correctly the mind of him by whom it was established. He it is who brought the message from above which no human power could have discovered. It is the Church's function to explain that message to the world; and, where needed, to deduce such inferences therefrom as by its supernatural inspiration it perceives to be just. Beyond this, the power of the Church does not extend.

A second external mark, closely related to the first, is, that the prophet of each religion is, within the limits of that religion, the object of a more or less mythical delineation of his personality. His historical form is, to some extent, superseded by the form bestowed upon him by a dogmatic legend. According to that legend there was something about his nature that was more than human. He was in some way extraordinary. The myths related vary from a mere exaltation of the common features of humanity, to the invention of completely supernatural attributes. But their object is the same: to represent their prophet as more highly endowed than other mortals. Even where there is little of absolute myth, the representation we receive is one-sided; we know nothing of the prophet's faults, except in so far as we may discover them against the will of the biographers. To them he appears all-virtuous. These remarks will be abundantly illustrated when we come to consider the life of Jesus, and to compare it with that of his compeers.

2. The internal mark corresponds to the first external mark, of which it is indeed the subjective counter-

part. These prophets conceive themselves deputed to teach a faith, and they virtually recognise in the performance of this mission no human authority superior to their own. In words, perhaps, they do acknowledge some established authority; but in fact they set it aside. No Church or priesthood has the smallest weight with them, as opposed to that intense internal conviction which appears to them an inspiration. Hence it was observed of Jesus, that he taught with authority, and not as the scribes. Without being able themselves to give any explanation of the fact, they feel themselves endowed with plenary power to reform. And it is not, like other reformers, in the name of another that they do this; they reform in their own right, and with no other title than their own profound consciousness of being not only permitted, but charged to do it.

Nevertheless, it must not be imagined that the prophets sweep away everything they find in the existing religion. On the contrary, it will be found on examination that they always retain some important element or elements of the older faith. Without this, they would have no hold on the popular mind of their country, from which they would be too far removed to make themselves understood. Thus, Allah was already recognised as God by the Arabians in the time of Mahomet, whose reform consisted in teaching that he was the only God. Thus, the Messiah was already expected by the Jews in the time of Jesus, whose reform consisted in applying the expectation to himself. Prophets take advantage of a faith already in existence, and making that the foundation of the new religion, erect upon it the more special truths they are inspired to proclaim.

No prophet can construct a religion entirely from his own brain. Were he to do so, he would be unable to show any reason why it should be accepted. There would be no feeling in the minds of his hearers to which he could appeal. A religion, to be accepted by any but an insignificant fraction, must find a response not only in the intellects, but in the emotions of those for whom it is designed.

This, it appears to me, is the weak point of Positivism. Auguste Comte, having abolished all that in the general mind constitutes religion at all, attempted to compose a faith for his disciples by the merely arbitrary exercise of his own ingenuity. He perhaps did not consider that in all history there is no example of a religion being invented by an individual thinker. It is like attempting to sell a commodity for which there is no demand. Even if his philosophical principles should be accepted by the whole of Europe, there can be no reason why the special observances he recommends should be adopted, or the special saints whom he places in the calendar be adored. Those who receive his philosophy will have no need for his ceremonies. While even if ceremonies cannot be entirely dispensed with, it is not the mere fact of a solitary thinker planning it in his own mind that can ever ensure the adoption of a ritual.

Very different has been the procedure of the prophets of whom we are now to speak. Intellectually, they were no doubt far inferior to the founder of the Positive Philosophy. But emotionally, they were fitted for the part which he unsuccessfully endeavoured to play. They entered into the religious feelings of their countrymen, and gave those feelings a higher expression than had yet been found for them.

Instinctively fixing on some conspicuous part of the old religion, they made that the starting-point for the development of the new. They reformed, but the reformation linked itself to some conviction that was already deeply rooted in the nature of their converts. They assumed boundless authority ; but it was authority to proclaim a pre-existing truth, not to spin out of their purely personal ideas of fitness a system altogether disconnected from the past evolution of religion, and to impose that system upon the remainder of mankind.

SECTION I.—CONFUCIUS.¹

The life of the prophet of China is not eventful. It has neither the charm of philosophic placidity and retirement from the world which belongs to that of Laò-tsè, nor the romantic interest of the more varied careers of Sakyamuni, Christ, or Mahomet. For Confucius, though a philosopher, did not object,

¹ After some hesitation, I have determined to adhere to the Latinised form of the name of the prophet of China, as more familiar to English ears. As a general rule, I consider the movement in literature which is restoring proper names to their original spellings,—giving us Herakles for Hercules, and Oidipous for Œdipus,—as deserving of all support. But where the common form, in addition to being the more familiar, may be considered as English proper and not Latin used in English (as in such names as Homer, Aristotle, Jesus Christ), I conceive it to be more convenient to retain the accustomed designation, even though it may be regretted that it has come into general use. Hence, I think, we may retain Confucius, who would scarcely be recognised by English readers under his full name Khung-fu-tsze, or under his more usual abridged name Khung-tsze, or under the name elsewhere given him, Chung-ne. No similar justification appears to me to exist for the Greek form Zoroaster, as compared with Zarathustra, which last form is as easy to pronounce as the other, and not very dissimilar from it in sound.

My authorities for the life of Confucius have been Dr Legge's *Chinese Classics*, vol. i., Proleg. p. 54–113, and the *Lun Yu* and *Chung Yung*, translated in the same volume.

indeed rather desired, to take some share in the government of his country, but his wishes received very little gratification. Rulers refused to acquiesce in his principles of administration, and he was compelled to rely for their propagation mainly on the oral instruction imparted to his disciples. His life, therefore, bears to some extent the aspect of a failure, though for this appearance he himself is not to blame. Another cause, which somewhat diminishes the interest we might otherwise take in him, is his excessive attention to proprieties, ceremonies, and rites. We cannot but feel that a truly great man, even in China, would have emancipated himself from the bondage of such trifles. Nevertheless, after all deductions are made, enough remains to render the career and character of Confucius deserving of attention, and in many respects of admiration.

Descended from a family which had formerly been powerful and noble, but was now in comparatively modest circumstances, he was born in B.C. 551, his father's name being Shuh-leang Heih, and his mother's Ching-Tsae. The legends related of his nativity I pass over for the present. His father, who was an old man when he was born, died when the child was in his third year; and his mother in B.C. 528. At nineteen, Confucius was married; and at twenty-one he came forward as a teacher. Disciples attached themselves to him, and during his long career as a philosopher, we find him constantly attended by some faithful friends, who receive all he says with unbounded deference, and propose questions for his decision as to an authority against whom there can be no appeal. The maxims of Confucius did not refer

solely to ethics or to religion ; they bore largely upon the art of government, and he was desirous if possible of putting them in actual practice in the administration of public affairs. China, however, was in a state of great confusion in his days ; there were rebellions and wars in progress ; and the character of the rulers from whom he might have obtained employment was such, that he could not, consistently with the high standard of honour on which he always acted, accept favours at their hands. One of them proposed to grant him a town with its revenues ; but Confucius said : “ A superior man will only receive reward for services which he has done. I have given advice to the duke king, but he has not obeyed it, and now he would endow me with this place ! very far is he from understanding me.”¹ In the year 500 the means were at length put within his reach of carrying his views into practice. He was made “ chief magistrate of a town ” in the state of Loo ; and this first appointment was followed by that of “ assistant-superintendent of works,” and subsequently by that of “ minister of crime.” In this office he is said to have put an end to crime altogether ; but Dr Legge rightly warns us against confiding in the “ indiscriminating eulogies ” of his disciples. A more substantial service attributed to him is that of procuring the dismantlement of two fortified towns which were the refuge of dangerous and warlike chiefs. But his reforming government was brought to an end after a few years by the weakness of his sovereign, duke Ting, who was captivated by a present of eighty beautiful and accomplished girls, and 120 horses, from a neighbouring State. Engrossed

¹ C. C., vol. 1. (Prolegomena) p. 68.

by this present, the duke neglected public affairs, and the philosopher felt bound to resign.

We need not follow him during the long wanderings through various parts of China which followed upon this disappointment. After travelling from State to State for many years, he returned in his sixty-ninth year to Loo, but not to office. In the year 478 his sad and troubled life was closed by death.

Our information respecting the character of Confucius is ample. From the book which Dr Legge has entitled the "Confucian Analects," a collection of his sayings made (as he believes) by the disciples of his disciples, we obtain the most minute particulars both as to his personal habits and as to the nature of his teaching. The impression derived from these accounts is that of a gentle, virtuous, benevolent, and eminently honourable man; a man who, like Sokrates, was indifferent to the reward received for his tuition, though not refusing payment altogether; who would never sacrifice a single principle for the sake of his individual advantage; yet who was anxious, if possible, to benefit the kingdom by the establishment of an administration penetrated with those ethical maxims which he conceived to be all-important. Yet, irreproachable as his moral character was, there is about him a deficiency of that bold originality which has characterised the greatest prophets of other nations. Sakyamuni revolted against the restrictions of caste which dominated all minds in India. Jesus boldly claimed for moral conduct a rank far superior to that of every ceremonial obligation, even those which were held the most sacred by his countrymen. Mahomet, morally far below the

Chinese sage, evinced a far more independent genius by his attack on the prevalent idolatry of Mecca. Confucius did nothing of this kind. His was a mind which looked back longingly to antiquity, and imagined that it discovered in the ancient rulers and the ancient modes of action, the models of perfection which all later times should strive to follow. Nor was this all. He was so profoundly under the influence of Chinese ways of thinking, as to attach an almost ludicrous importance to a precise conformity to certain rules of propriety, and to regard the exactitude with which ceremonies were performed as matter of the highest concern. In fact, he could not emancipate himself from the traditions of his country; and his principles would have resulted rather in making his followers perfect Chinamen than perfect men.

A far more serious charge is indeed brought against him by Dr Legge—that of insincerity.¹ I hesitate to impugn the opinion of so competent a scholar; yet the evidence he has produced does not seem to me sufficient to sustain the indictment. Granting that he gave an unwelcome visitor the excuse of sickness, which was untrue, still, as we are ignorant of the reasons which led him to decline seeing the person in question, we cannot estimate the force of the motives that induced him to put forward a plea in conformity with the polite customs of his country. It does not appear, moreover, that he practised an intentional deceit. And though on one occasion he may have violated an oath extorted by rebels who had him in their power, therein acting wrongly (as I think), it is always an open question how far promises made under

¹ C. C., vol. i. (Prolegomena) p. 101.

such circumstances are binding on the conscience. Whatever failings, however, it may be necessary to admit, there can be no question of the pre-eminent purity alike of his life and doctrine. His is a character which, be its imperfections what they may, we cannot help loving; and there have been few, indeed, who would not have been benefited by the attempt to reach even that standard of virtue which he held up to the admiration of his disciples.

A few quotations from the works in which his words and actions are preserved, will illustrate these remarks. In the tenth Book of the Analects,¹ his manners, his garments, his mode of behaviour under various circumstances, are elaborately described. There are not many personages in history of whom we have so minute a knowledge. We learn that "in his village" he "looked simple and sincere, and as if he were not able to speak." His reverence for his superiors seems to have been profound. "When the prince was present, his manner displayed respectful uneasiness; it was grave, but self-possessed." When going to an audience of the prince, "he ascended the dais, holding up his robe with both his hands, and his body bent; holding in his breath also, as if he dared not breathe. When he came out *from the audience*,² as soon as he had descended one step, he began to relax his countenance, and had a satisfied look. When he had got to the bottom of the steps, he advanced rapidly to his place, *with his arms* like wings, and on occupying it, his manner *still* showed respectful uneasiness." He was rather particular about his food, rejecting meat unless "cut properly," and with "its proper sauce."

¹ C. C., vol. i. p. 91-100. ² The italics, here and elsewhere, are in Legge.

Whatever he might be eating, however, "he would offer a little of it in sacrifice." "When any of his friends died, if the deceased had no relations who could be depended on for the necessary offices, he would say, 'I will bury him.'" "In bed, he did not lie like a corpse." And it is satisfactory to learn of one who was such a respecter of formalities, that "at home he did not put on any formal deportment." Notwithstanding this, he does not appear to have been on very intimate terms with his son, to whom he is reported to have said that unless he learned "the odes" he would not be fit to converse with; and that unless he learned "the rules of propriety" his character could not be established. The disciple, who was informed by the son himself that he had never heard from his father any other special doctrine, was probably right in concluding that "the superior man maintains a distant reserve towards his son."¹

But with his beloved disciples Confucius was on terms of affectionate intimacy which does not seem to have been marred by "the rules of propriety." For the death of one of them at least he mourned so bitterly as to draw down upon himself the expostulation of those who remained.² The picture of the Master, accompanied at all times by his faithful friends, who hang upon his lips, and eagerly gather up his every utterance, is on the whole a pleasant one. "Do you think, my disciples," he asks, "that I have any concealments? I conceal nothing from you. There is nothing that I do which is not shown to you, my disciples;—that is my way."³ And with all the homage he is constantly receiving, Confucius is never

¹ Lun Yu, xvi. 13.² Ibid., xi. 9.³ Ibid., vii. 23.

arrogant. He never speaks like a man who wishes to enforce his views in an authoritative style on others ; never threatens punishment either here or hereafter to those who dissent from him.

“There were four things,” his disciples tell us, “from which the Master was entirely free. He had no foregone conclusions, no arbitrary predeterminations, no obstinacy, and no egoism.”¹ And his conduct is entirely in harmony with this statement. It is as a learner rather than a teacher that he regards himself. “The Master said, ‘When I walk along with two others, they may serve me as my teachers. I will select their good qualities, and follow them ; their bad qualities, and avoid them.’”² Or again : “The sage and the man of perfect virtue, how dare I *rank myself with them* ? It may simply be said of me, that I strive to become such without satiety, and teach others without weariness.”³ “In letters I am perhaps equal to other men, but *the character* of the superior man, carrying out in his conduct what he professes, is what I have not yet attained to.”⁴

Notwithstanding this modesty, there are traces—few indeed, but not obscure—of that conviction of a peculiar mission which all great prophets have entertained, and without which even Confucius would scarcely have been ranked among them. The most distinct of these is the following passage :—“The Master was put in fear in K’wang. He said, ‘After the death of king Wān, was not the cause of truth lodged here *in me* ? If Heaven had wished to let this cause of truth perish, then I, a future mortal, should not have got such a relation to that cause. While Heaven does not

¹ Lun Yü, ix. 4. ² Ibid., vii. 21. ³ Ibid., vii. 33. ⁴ Ibid., vii. 32.

let the cause of truth perish, what can the people of K'wang do to me?'¹” These remarkable words would be conclusive, if they stood alone. But they do not stand alone. In another place we find him thus lamenting the pain of being generally misunderstood, which is apt to be so keenly felt by exalted and sensitive natures. “The Master said, ‘Alas! there is no one that knows me.’ Tse-kung said, ‘What do you mean by thus saying—that no one knows you?’ The Master replied, ‘I do not murmur against Heaven. I do not grumble against men. My studies lie low, and my penetration rises high. But there is Heaven;—that knows me!’”² Men might reject his labours and despise his teaching, but he would complain neither against Heaven nor against them. If he was not known by men, he was known by Heaven, and that was enough. On another occasion, “the Master said, ‘Heaven produced the virtue that is in me, Hwan T’uy—what can he do to me?’”³

These passages are the more remarkable, because Confucius was not in the ordinary sense a believer in God. That is, he never, throughout his instructions, says a single word implying acknowledgment of a personal Deity; a Creator of the world; a Being whom we are bound to worship as the author of our lives and the ruler of our destinies. He has even been suspected of omitting from his edition of the Shoo-king and the She-king everything that could support the comparatively theistic doctrine of his contem-

¹ Lun Yu, ix. 5.

² Ibid., xiv. 37.

³ Ibid., vii. 22. The occasion of this utterance is said to have been an attack by the emissaries of an officer named Hwan T’uy, with a view of killing the sage.

porary, *Laò-tsè*.¹ That his high respect for antiquity would have permitted such a procedure is, to say the least, very improbable; and Dr Legge is no doubt right in acquitting him of any wilful suppression of, or addition to, the ancient articles of Chinese faith.² For our present purpose it is enough to note that he avoided all discussion on the higher problems of religion; and contented himself with speaking, and that but rarely, of a vague, and hardly personal Being which he called Heaven. Thus, in a book attributed (perhaps erroneously) to his grandson, he is reported as saying, "Sincerity is the very way of Heaven."³ Of king Woo and the duke of Chow, two ancient worthies, he says:—"By the ceremonies of the sacrifices to Heaven and Earth they served God" (where he seems to distinguish between Heaven and God, whom I believe he never mentions but here); "and by the ceremonies of the ancestral temple they sacrificed to their ancestors. He who understands the ceremonies of the sacrifices to Heaven and Earth, and the meaning of the several sacrifices to ancestors, would find the government of a kingdom as easy as to look into his palm."⁴ Elsewhere, he remarks that "he who is greatly virtuous will be sure to receive the appointment of Heaven."⁵ Again: "Heaven, in the production of things, is surely bountiful to them, according to their qualities."⁶ Nothing very definite can be gathered from these passages, as to his opinions concerning the nature of the power of which he spoke thus obscurely. Yet it would be rash to find fault with him on that account. His

¹ By V. von Strauss, T. T. K., p. xxxviii.

² C. C., vol. i. (Prolegomena) p. 99.

³ *Chung Yung*, xx. 18.

⁴ *Ibid.*, xix. 6.

⁵ *Ibid.*, xvii. 5.

⁶ *Ibid.*, xvii. 3.

language may have been, and in all probability was, the correct expression of his feelings. His mind was not of the dogmatic type ; and if he does not teach his disciples any very intelligible principles concerning spiritual matters, it is simply because he is honestly conscious of having none to teach.

There are, indeed, indications which might be taken to imply the existence of an esoteric doctrine. "To those," he says, "whose talents are above mediocrity, the highest subjects may be announced. To those who are below mediocrity, the highest subjects may not be announced."¹ We are further told that Tsze-kung said, "The Master's *personal* displays of his principles, and *ordinary* descriptions of them may be heard. His discourses about *man's* nature, and the way of Heaven, cannot be heard."² This last passage appears to mean that they were not open to the indiscriminate multitude, nor perhaps to all of the disciples. But we may reasonably suppose that the intimate friends who recorded his sayings were considered by him to be above mediocrity, and were the depositaries of all he had to tell them on religious matters.

Yet this, little as it was, may not always have been rightly understood. Once, for example, he says to a disciple, "Sin, my doctrine is that of an all-pervading unity." This is interpreted by the disciple (in the Master's absence) to mean only that his doctrine is "to be true to the principles of our nature, and the benevolent exercise of them to others."³ I can hardly believe that Confucius would have taught so simple a lesson under so obscure a figure ; and it is possible

¹ Lun Yu, vi. 19.

² Ibid., v. 12.

³ Ibid., iv. 15.

that the reserve he habitually practised with regard to his religious faith may have prevented a fuller explanation. "The subjects on which the Master did not talk were—extraordinary things, feats of strength, disorder, and spiritual beings."¹ And although, in the Doctrine of the Mean (a work which is perhaps less authentic than the Analects) we find him discoursing freely on spiritual beings, which, he says, "abundantly display the powers that belong to them,"² there are portions of the Analects which confirm the impression that he did not readily venture into these extra-mundane regions. Heaven itself, he once pointed out to an over-curious disciple, preserves an unbroken silence.³ Interrogated "about serving the spirits of the dead," he gave this striking answer: "While you are not able to serve men, how can you serve their spirits?" And when "Ke Loo added, 'I venture to ask about death?' he was answered, 'While you do not know life, how can you know about death?'"⁴ Another instance of a similar reticence is presented by his conduct during an illness. "The Master being very sick, Tsze-Loo asked leave to pray for him. He said, 'May such a thing be done?' Tsze-Loo replied, 'It may. In the prayers it is said, Prayer has been made to the spirits of the upper and lower worlds.' The Master said, 'My praying has been for a long time.'"⁵ I am unable to see "the satisfaction of Confucius with himself," which Dr Legge discovers in this reply. To me it appears simply to indicate the devout attitude of his mind,

¹ Lun Yu, vii. 20.

² Chung Yung, 16.

³ Lun Yu, xvii. 19.

⁴ Ibid., xi. 11.

⁵ Ibid., vii. 34.

which is evinced by many other passages in his conversations. In short, though we may complain of the indefinite character of the faith he taught, and wish that he had expressed himself more fully, there can scarcely be a doubt that Confucius had a deeply religious mind; and that he looked with awe and reverence upon that power which he called by the name of "Heaven," which controlled the progress of events, and would not suffer the cause of truth to perish altogether.

It is true, however, that he confined himself chiefly, and indeed almost entirely, to moral teaching. His main object undoubtedly was to inculcate upon his friends, and if possible to introduce among the people at large, those great principles of ethics which he thought would restore the virtue and wellbeing of ancient times. Those principles are aptly summarised in the following verse: "The duties of universal obligation are five, and the virtues wherewith they are practised are three. The duties are those between sovereign and minister, between father and son, between husband and wife, between elder brother and younger, and those belonging to the intercourse of friends. Those five are the duties of universal obligation. Knowledge, magnanimity, and energy, these three are the virtues universally binding; and the means by which they carry the duties into practice is singleness."¹ In the *Analects*, "Gravity, generosity of soul, sincerity, earnestness, and kindness," are said to constitute perfect virtue.²

It is as an earnest and devoted teacher, both by example and by precept, of these and other virtues,

¹ *Chung Yung*, xx. 8.

² *Lun Yu*, xvii. 6.

that Confucius must be judged. And in order to assist the formation of such a judgment, let us take his doctrine of Reciprocity, to which I shall return in another place. "Tsze-kung asked, saying, 'Is there one word which may serve as a rule of practice for all one's life?' The Master said, 'Is not RECIPROCITY such a word? What you do not want done to yourself, do not do to others.'"¹ On a kindred topic he thus delivered his opinion: "Some one said, 'What do you say concerning the principle that injury should be recompensed with kindness?' The Master said, 'With what, then, will you recompense kindness? Recompense injury with justice, and recompense kindness with kindness.'"²

If in the above sentence he may be thought to fall short of the highest elevation, there are some among his apophthegms, the point and excellence of which have, perhaps, never been surpassed. Take for instance these:—"The superior man is catholic and no partizan. The mean man is a partizan and not catholic." "Learning without thought is labour lost; thought without learning is perilous."³ Or these:—"I will not be afflicted at men's not knowing me; I will be afflicted that I do not know men."⁴ "A scholar, whose mind is set on truth, and who is ashamed of bad clothes and bad food, is not fit to be discoursed with."⁵ "The superior man is affable, but not adulatory; the mean is adulatory, but not affable."⁶ "Where the solid qualities are in excess of accomplishments, we have rusticity; where the

¹ Lun Yu, xv. 23.

² Ibid., xiv. 26.

³ Ibid., ii. 14, 15.

⁴ Ibid., i. 16.

⁵ Ibid., iv. 9.

⁶ Ibid., xiii. 23.

accomplishments are in excess of the solid qualities, we have the manners of a clerk. When the accomplishments and solid qualities are equally blended, we then have the man of complete virtue.”¹ Lastly, I will quote one which, with a slight change of terms, might have emanated from the pen of Thomas Carlyle: “There are three things of which the superior man stands in awe:—He stands in awe of the ordinances of heaven; he stands in awe of great men; he stands in awe of the words of sages. The mean man does not know the ordinances of heaven, and *consequently* does not stand in awe of them. He is disrespectful to great men. He makes sport of the words of sages.”²

These, and various other recorded sayings, go far to explain, if not to justify, the unbounded admiration of his faithful follower, Tsze-kung: “Our Master cannot be attained to, just in the same way as the heavens cannot be gone up to by the steps of a stair. Were our Master in the position of the prince of a State, or the chief of a family, we should find verified the description *which has been given of a sage’s rule*:—he would plant the people, and forthwith they would be established; he would lead them on, and forthwith they would follow him; he would make them happy, and forthwith *multitudes* would resort to *his dominions*; he would stimulate them, and forthwith they would be harmonious. While he lived, he would be glorious. When he died, he would be bitterly lamented. How is it possible for him to be attained to?”³

¹ Lun Yu, vi. 16.² Ibid., xvi. 8.³ Ibid., xix. 25.

SECTION II.—LAÒ-TSÈ.¹

Concerning the life of Laò-tsè, the founder of the smallest of the three sects of China (Confucians, Buddhists, and Taouists), we have only the most meagre information. Scarcely anything is known either of his personal character or of his doctrine, except through his book. His birth-year is unknown to us, and can only be approximately determined by means of the date assigned to his famous interview with his great contemporary, Confucius. This occurred in B.C. 517, when Laò-tsè was very old. He may, therefore, have been born about the year B.C. 600.² All we can say of his career is, that he held an office in the State of Tscheu, that of "writer (or historian) of the archives." When visited by Confucius, who was the master of a rival school, he is said to have addressed him in these terms:—"Those whom you talk about are dead, and their bones are mouldered to dust; only their words remain. When the superior man gets his time, he mounts aloft; but when the time is against him, he moves as if his feet were entangled. I have heard that a good merchant, though he has rich treasures deeply stored, appears as if he were poor; and that the superior man, whose virtue is complete, is yet to outward seeming stupid. Put away your proud air and many desires; your insinuating habit and wild will. These are of no advantage to you. This is all which I have to tell you." After this interview, Confucius thus expressed his opinion of the older philosopher to

¹ For authorities on Laò-tsè, see vol. ii. chap. vi. section ii.

² Julien assigns B.C. 604 as the date, but confesses that he has no authority but historical tradition. L. V. V. xix.

his disciples:—"I know how birds can fly, how fishes can swim, and how animals can run. But the runner may be snared, the swimmer may be hooked, and the flyer may be shot by the arrow. But there is the dragon. I cannot tell how he mounts on the wind through the clouds and rises to heaven. To-day I have seen Laò-tsè, and can only compare him to the dragon."¹

Troubles in the State in which he held office induced him to retire, and to seek the frontier. Here the officer in command requested him to write a book, the result of which request was the Taò-tě-king. "No one knows," says the Chinese historian, "where he died. Laò-tsè was a hidden sage."²

To this very scanty historical information we may add such indications as Laò-tsè himself has given us of his personality. One of these is contained in the twentieth chapter of his work, in which he tells us that while other men are radiant with pleasure, he is calm, like a child that does not yet smile. He wavers to and fro, as one who knows not where to turn. Other men have abundance; he is as it were deprived of all. He is like a stupid fellow, so confused does he feel. Ordinary men are enlightened; he is obscure and troubled in mind. Like the sea he is forgotten, and driven about like one who has no certain resting-place. All other men are of use; he alone is clownish like a peasant. He alone is unlike other men, but he honours the nursing Mother.³

It is obvious that an estimate so depreciatory is not to be taken literally. To understand its full signifi-

¹ C. C., vol. i. Proleg. p. 65.—T. T. K., p. liii.—L. T., p. iv.

² T. T. K., p. lvi.

³ T. T. K., ch. xx.

cance, it should be compared to the magnificent description in Plato's *Theætetus* of the outward appearance presented by the philosopher, who, in presence of practical men, is the jest alike of "Thracian handmaids," and of "the general herd;" who is "unacquainted with his next-door neighbour;" who is "ignorant of what is before him, and always at a loss;" and who is so awkward and useless when called on to perform some menial office, such as "packing up a bag, or flavouring a sauce, or fawning speech." Yet this philosopher, like *Laò-tsè*, "honours his nursing Mother;" he moves in a sphere of thought where men of the world cannot follow him, and where they in their turn are lost.¹ Just such a character as that drawn by Plato, *Laò-tsè* seems to have been. Living in retirement, and devoted to philosophy, he appeared to his contemporaries an eccentric and incompetent person. Yet he says that they called him great,² which seems to imply that his reputation was already founded in his lifetime.

One other reference to himself must not be omitted, for it evinces the sense he had of the nature of his work in the world. "My words," so he writes in his paradoxical manner, "are very easy to understand, very easy to follow,—no one in the world is able to understand them, no one is able to follow them. The words have an author, the works have one who enjoins them; but he is not understood, therefore I am not understood."³ On this Stanislas Julien observes, "There is not a word of *Laò-tsè*'s that has not a solid foundation. In fact, they have for their origin and basis *Taò* and *Virtue*."⁴ These expressions, then, suffice to

¹ *Theætetus*, 174-176. ² Ch. lxvii. ³ Ch. lxx. ⁴ L. V. V. p. 269, n. 2.

show that Laḍ-tseḍ was not destitute of that sense of inspiration of which other great prophets have been so profoundly conscious.

SECTION III.—GAUTAMA BUDDHA.¹

SUBDIVISION I. *The Historical Buddha.*

Were we to write the history of the Buddha according to the fashion of Buddhist historians, we should have to begin our story several ages before his birth. For the theory of his disciples is, that during many millions of years, through an almost innumerable series of different lives, he had been preparing himself for the great office of the saviour of humanity which he at length assumed. Only by the practice of incredible self-denial, and unbounded virtue, during all the long line of human births he was destined to undergo, could he become fitted for that consummate duty, the performance of which at last released him for ever from the bonds of existence. For the total extinction of conscious life, not its continuation in a better sphere, is, or at any rate was, the goal of the pious Buddhist. And it was the crowning merit of the Buddha, that he not only sought this reward for himself, but qualified himself by ages of endurance to enlighten others as to the way in which it might be earned.

But we will not encumber ourselves with the pre-

¹ The following works may be advantageously consulted with reference to the Buddha Sakyamuni:—Notices on the Life of Shakya, by Csoma Körösi; Asiatic Researches, vol. xx. part ii. p. 285; the Rgya Tch'er Rol Pa, par Ph. Ed. Foucaux; Hardy's Manual of Buddhism; Bigandet's Life or Legend of Gautama, the Budha of the Burmese; Alabaster's Wheel of the Law; and Koeppen's Religion des Buddha, vol. i. p. 71, ff. Some information will also be found in my article on "Recent Publications on Buddhism," in the *Theological Review* for July 1872.

historic Buddha, the tales of whose deeds are palpable fictions, but will endeavour to unravel the thread of genuine fact which probably runs through the accepted life of Sakyamuni in his final appearance upon earth. And here we are met with a preliminary difficulty. That life is not guaranteed by any trustworthy authority. It cannot be traced back to any known disciple of Buddha. It cannot be shown to have been written within a century after his death, and it may have been written later. Ancient, however, it undoubtedly is. For the separation of northern from southern Buddhism occurred at an early period in the history of the Church, probably about two hundred years after the death of its founder; and this life is the common property of all sections of Buddhists. It was consequently current before that separation. But its antiquity does not make it trustworthy. On the contrary, it is constructed in accordance with an evident design. Every incident has a definite dogmatic value, and stands in well-marked dogmatic relations to the rest. There is nothing natural or spontaneous about them. Everything has its proper place, and its distinct purpose. And it is useless to attempt to deal with such a life on the rationalistic plan of sifting the historical from the fabulous; the natural and possible from the miraculous and impossible elements. The close intermixture of the two renders any such process hopeless. We are, in fact, with regard to the life of Gautama Buddha, much in the position that we should be in with regard to the life of Jesus Christ, had we no records to consult but the apocryphal gospels.

Nevertheless, while holding that his biography can never now be written, it is by no means my intention

to imply that it is impossible to know anything about him. On the contrary, a picture not wholly imaginary may unquestionably be drawn of the character and doctrines of the great teacher of the Asiatic continent. Let us venture on the attempt.

An imposing array of scholars agrees in fixing the date of his death in B.C. 543, and as he is said to have lived eighty years, he would thus have been born in B.C. 623. Without entering now into the grounds of their inference, I venture to believe that they have thrown him back to a too distant date. I am more inclined to agree with Köppen, who would place his death from B.C. 480 to 460, or about two centuries before the accession of the great Buddhist king Asoka. Westergaard, it is true, would fix this event much later, namely, about B.C. 370. Supposing the former writer to be correct in his conclusions, the active portion of the Buddha's life would fall to the earlier years of the 5th century B.C., and possibly to the conclusion of the 6th. His birth, about B.C. 560-540, occurred in a small kingdom of the north of India, entitled Kapilavastu. Of what rank his parents may have been, the accounts before us do not enable us to say. The tradition according to which they were the king and queen of the country, I regard with Wassiljew as in all probability an invention intended to shed additional glory upon him. The boy is said to have been named Siddhartha, though possibly this also was one of the many titles bestowed on him by subsequent piety. At an early age he felt—as so many young men of lofty character have always done—the hollowness of worldly pleasures, and withdrew himself from men to lead a solitary and ascetic life.

After he had satisfied the craving for self-torture, and subdued the lusts of the flesh, he came forth, full of zeal for the redemption of mankind, to proclaim a new and startling gospel. India was at that time, as always, dominated by the system of caste. The Buddha, boldly breaking through the deepest prejudices of his countrymen, surrounded himself with a society in which caste was nothing. Let but a man or even a woman (for it is stated that at his sister's request he admitted women) become his disciple, agree to renounce the world, and lead the life of an ascetic, and he or she at once lost either the privileges of a high caste, or the degradations of a low one. Rank depended henceforth exclusively upon capacity for the reception of spiritual truth ; and the humblest individual might, by attending to and practising the teacher's lessons, rise to the highest places in the hierarchy. "Since the doctrine which I teach," he is represented as saying in one of the Canonical Books, "is completely pure, it makes no distinction between noble and commoner, between rich and poor. It is, for example, like water, which washes both noblemen and common people, both rich and poor, both good and bad, and purifies all without distinction. It may, to take another illustration, be compared to fire, which consumes mountains, rocks, and all great and small objects between heaven and earth without distinction. Again, my doctrine is like heaven, inasmuch as there is room within it, without exception, for whomsoever it may be ; for men and women, for boys and girls, for rich and poor."¹ This was the practical side of Sakyamuni's great reform.

¹ W. u. T., p. 282.

Its theoretical side was this. Life was regarded by Indian devotees, not as a blessing, but as an unspeakable misery. Deliverance from existence altogether, not merely transposition to a happier mode of existence, was the object of their ardent longing. The Buddha did not seek to oppose this craving for annihilation, but to satisfy it. He addressed himself to the problem, How is pain produced, and how can it be extinguished? And his meditations led him to what are termed "the four truths"—the cardinal dogma of Buddhism in all its forms. The four truths are stated as follows:—

1. The existence of pain.
2. The production of pain.
3. The annihilation of pain.
4. The way to the annihilation of pain.

The meaning of the truths is this:—Pain exists; that is, all living beings are subject to it; its production is the result of the existence of such beings; its annihilation is possible; and lastly, the way to attain that annihilation is to enter on the paths opened to mankind by Gautama Buddha. In other words, the way to avoid that awful series of succeeding births to which the Indian believed himself subject, was to adopt the monastic life; to practise all virtues, more especially charity; to acquire a profound knowledge of spiritual truths; and, in fine, to follow the teaching of the Buddha. Renounce the world, and you will—sooner or later, according to your degree of merit—be freed from the curse of existence; this seems to sum up, in brief, the gospel proclaimed with all the fervour of a great discovery by the new teacher. After about forty-five years

of public life devoted to mankind, he died at the age of eighty, at Kusinagara, deeply mourned by a few faithful disciples who had clustered around him, and no doubt regretted by many who had found repose and comfort in his doctrines, and had been strengthened by his example. The names of his principal disciples become almost as familiar to a reader of Buddhist books as those of Peter, James, and John, to a Christian. Maudgalyayana and Sariputtra, the eminent evangelists, and Ananda, the beloved disciple, the close friend and servant of the Buddha, are among the most prominent of this little group. With them rested the propagation of the faith, and the vast results, which in two centuries followed their exertions, prove that they were not remiss. The stories of the thousands who embraced the proffered salvation in the lifetime of the Buddha are pious fancies. It was the apostles and Fathers of the Church who, while developing his doctrines and largely adding to their complexity and number, almost succeeded in rendering his religion the dominant creed of India.

Such is, in my opinion, the sum total of our positive knowledge with regard to the life lived, and the truths taught, by this great figure in human history. The two points to which I have adverted—namely, the formation of a society apart from the world in which caste was nothing, and the hope held out of annihilation by the practice of virtues and asceticism—are too fundamental and too ancient to be derived from any but the founder. After all, ecclesiastical biographers, while they adorn their heroes with fictitious trappings, do not invent them altogether. A man from whose tuition great results have flowed, cannot be a small

man ; something of those results must needs be due to the impulse he has given. And if the Buddha must have taught something, must have inaugurated some reform, what is he more likely to have taught, than the way to the annihilation of pain ? what reform more likely to have inaugurated, than the creation of a society held together by purely spiritual ties ? Both are absolutely essential to Buddhism as we know it. Both are closely connected. For Buddhism would have had nothing to offer without the hope of extinction ; and this hope, while leading to the practice of an austere and religious life, can itself be fulfilled only by that life ; implying as it does a detachment from the bonds of carnality which hold us to this scene of suffering. Thus, these corner-stones of Buddhism—flowing as they must have done from a master-mind—may, with the highest probability, be assigned to its author.

On one other point there is no reason to call in question the testimony of the legend. We need not doubt that he really was the pure, gentle, benevolent, and blameless man which that legend depicts him to have been. Even his enemies have not attempted (I believe) to malign his character. He stands before us as one of the few great leaders of humanity who seem endowed with every virtue, and free from every fault.

SUBDIVISION 2. *The Mythical Buddha.*

Buddhistic authorities divide the life of their founder into twelve great periods, under which it will be convenient to treat of it :—

1. His descent from heaven.
2. His incarnation.
3. His birth.
4. His display of various accomplishments.
5. His marriage, and enjoyment of domestic life.
6. His departure from home, and assumption of the monastic character.
7. His penances.
8. His triumph over the devil.
9. His attainment of the Buddhahood.
10. His turning the Wheel of the Law.
11. His death.
12. His cremation, and the division of his relics.

1. Following, then, the guidance of the accepted legend, we must begin with his resolution to be born on earth for the salvation of the world. After thousands of preparatory births, he was residing in a certain heaven called Tushita, that being one of the numerous stages in the ascending series of the abodes of the blessed. At length, the end of his sojourn in this heaven arrived. He determined to quit the gods who were his companions there, and to be born on earth. Careful consideration convinced him that the monarch Suddhodana, and his queen, Maya Devi, alone possessed those pre-eminent qualifications which entitled them to become the parents of a Buddha. Suddhodana lived in the town of Kapila, and belonged to the royal family of the Sakyas, the only family which the Bodhisattva (or destined Buddha) had discovered by his examination to be free from faults by which it would have been disqualified to receive him as one of its members. His

wife, in addition to the most consummate beauty, was distinguished for every conjugal and feminine virtue. Here, then, was a couple worthy of the honour about to be conferred upon their house.

2. At this critical moment Maya had demanded, and obtained, the permission of the king to devote herself for a season to the practice of fasting and penance. While engaged in these austerities, she dreamt that a beautiful white elephant approached her, penetrated her side, and entered her womb. At this very time, Bodhisattva actually descended in the shape of a white elephant, and took up his abode within her body. On waking, she related the dream to her husband, who called upon the official Brahmans to interpret it. They declared it to be of good augury. The queen, they said, carried in her womb a being who would either be a "Wheel King," or Sovereign of the whole world; or if he took to a monastic career, would become a Buddha. All things went well during Maya's pregnancy. According to all accounts she underwent none of the discomforts incidental to that state. One writer states that "her soul enjoyed a perfect calm, the sweetest happiness; fatigue and weariness never affected her unimpaired health." Another remarks that she enjoyed "the most perfect health, and was free from fainting fits." An additional gratification lay in the fact, that she was able to see the infant Bodhisattva sitting calmly in his place within her person.

3. Ten months having passed (a Buddha always takes ten), the queen expressed a desire to walk in a beautiful garden called Lumbini; and, with the king's ready permission, proceeded thither with her attendants.

In this garden the hour of her delivery came on. Standing under a tree (the *figus religiosa*), which courteously lowered its branches that she might hold on by them during labour, she gave birth to the child who was afterwards to be the first of human-kind. Gods from heaven received him when born, and he himself at once took several steps forward, and exclaimed: "This is my last birth—there shall be to me no other state of existence: I am the greatest of all beings." Ananda, his cousin, and afterwards his disciple, was born at the same moment. Maya, notwithstanding her excellent health, died seven days after her child's birth. This was not from any physical infirmity, but because it is the invariable rule that the mother of a Buddha should die at that exact time. The reason of this, according to the *Lalitavistara*, is, that when the Buddha became a wandering monk her heart would break. Other respectable authorities assert, that the womb in which a Bodhisattva has lain is like a sanctuary where a relic is enshrined. "No human being can again occupy it, or use it."¹ Maya was born again in one of the celestial regions, and the infant was confided to her sister, his aunt Prajapati, or Gautami, who was assisted in the care of her charge by thirty-two nurses. He was christened Sarvarthasiddha, usually shortened into Siddhartha. He is also known as Gautama Buddha, by which name he is distinguished from other Buddhas; as Sakyamuni, the hermit of the Sakya race; as the Tathagata, he who walks in the footsteps of his predecessors; as Bhagavat, Lord; and by other honorific titles.

¹ P. A., No. III. p. 27.

Soon after the birth of the Bodhisattva, he was visited and adored by a very eminent Rishi, or hermit, known as Asita (or Kapiladevila), who predicted his future greatness, but wept at the thought that he himself was too old to see the day when the law of salvation would be taught by the infant whom he had come to contemplate.

4. When the appropriate age for the marriage of the young prince arrived, a wife, possessing all the perfections requisite for so excellent a husband, was sought. She was found in a maiden named Gopa (or Yasodhara), the daughter of Dandapani, one of the Sakya race. An unexpected obstacle, however, arose. The father of the lovely Gopa complained that Siddhartha's education had been grossly neglected, and that he was wanting alike in literary accomplishments and in muscular proficiency—things which were invariably demanded of the husbands of Sakya princesses. It does, indeed, appear that Suddhodana had taken little pains to cultivate his son's abilities, and that he had mainly confined himself to the care of his personal safety by surrounding him with attendants. Accordingly, he asked the prince whether he thought he could exhibit his skill in those branches of knowledge, the mastery of which Dandapani had declared to be a necessary condition of his consent. Siddhartha assured his father that he could; and in a regular competitive examination, which was thereupon held, he completely defeated the other princes, not only in writing, arithmetic, and such matters, but in wrestling and archery. In the last art, especially, he gained a signal victory, by easily wielding a bow which none of the others could manage.

5. Gopa was now won, and conducted by her husband to a magnificent palace, where, surrounded by a vast harem of beautiful women, he spent some years of his life in the enjoyment of excessive luxury. But worldly pleasure was not to retain him long in its embrace.

6. A crisis in his life was now approaching. Sudhodana had been warned that Siddhartha would assume the ascetic character if four objects were to meet his sight : an old man, a sick man, a corpse, and a recluse. Sudhodana, who would have much preferred his son being a universal monarch to his becoming a Buddha, anxiously endeavoured to guard him from coming across these things. But all was in vain. One day, when driving in the town, he perceived a wrinkled, decrepit, and miserable old man. Having inquired of the coachman what this strange creature was, and having learnt from him that he was only suffering the general fate of humanity, the Bodhisattva was much affected ; and, full of sad thoughts, ordered his chariot to be turned homewards. Meeting on two other occasions, likewise when driving, with a man emaciated by sickness, and with a corpse, he was led to still further reflections on the wretchedness of the conditions under which we live. Prepared by these meditations, he yielded completely to the tendencies aroused within him when, on a fourth excursion, he came across a monk. The aspect of this man—his calmness, his dignity, his downcast eyes, his decent deportment—filled him with desire to abandon the world like him.

The die was cast. Nothing could now retain the Bodhisattva, at this time a young man of nine-and-

twenty, from the course that approved itself to his conscience. In vain did his father cause his palace to be surrounded with guards. In vain did the ladies of the harem (acting under instructions) deploy their most ravishing arts to captivate and to amuse him. His resolution was finally fixed by a singular circumstance. The beautiful damsels who ministered to him had sought to engage his attention by an exhibition of the most graceful dancing, accompanied by music, displaying their forms before his eyes as they executed their varied movements. But the Boddhisattva, deep in his meditations, was wholly unaffected. He fell asleep; and the women, baffled in their attempts and wearied out, soon followed his example. But in the course of the night the prince awoke. And then the sight of these girls, slumbering in all sorts of ungainly and ungraceful postures, utterly disgusted him. Summoning a courtier, named Chandaka, he ordered him at once to prepare his favourite horse Kantaka, that he might quit the city of his fathers, and lead the life of a humble recluse. But before thus abandoning his home, there was one painful parting to be gone through. One tie still held him to the world. His wife had just become a mother. Anxious to see his infant son, Rahula, before his departure, he gently opened the door of his wife's apartment. He found her sleeping with one hand over the head of the child. He would fain have taken a last look at his little boy, but fearing that if he withdrew the mother's hand she would awake and hinder his departure, he retired without approaching the bed. In the dead of night, mounted on Kantaka, and with the one attendant whom he had taken into the secret,

he managed to leave Kapilavastu unperceived, never to return to it again till he had attained the full dignity of a Buddha.

7. Having sent back Chandaka with the horse, the Boddhisattva commenced, alone and unaided, a course of austerities fitted to prepare him for his great duty. He tried Brahminical teachers, but was soon dissatisfied with their doctrine. Five of the disciples of one of these teachers followed him for six years in the homeless and wandering life he now began. He adopted the most rigid asceticism, reducing his body to the last degree of feebleness and emaciation. But this too discovered itself to his mind as an error. He took to eating again, and regained his strength, whereupon the five disciples left him, viewing him as a man who had weakly abandoned his principles.

8. After this period of gradual approach to the required perfection, the Boddhisattva went to Bodhimanda, the place appointed for his reception of the Buddhahood. Here he had to withstand a furious attack by the demon Mara, who first endeavoured to annihilate him by his armies, and then to seduce him by the fascinations of his three daughters. But Gautama withstood his male and female adversaries with equal calmness and success. Of the latter he had possibly had enough in his princely palace.

9. All these trials having been surmounted, he placed himself under the Bodhi (or Intelligence) tree, and there, engaging in the most intense meditations, gradually reached the intellectual and moral height towards which he had long been climbing. He was now in possession of Bodhi, or that complete and perfect knowledge which constitutes a Buddha. He was thus

fit to teach the law of salvation, but the Lalitavistara represents him as still doubting for a moment whether he should engage in a task which he feared would be thankless and unavailing. Men, he thought, would be incapable of receiving so sublime a doctrine, and he would incur fatigue and make exertions in vain. Silence and solitude recommended themselves at this moment to his spirit. But from a resolution so disastrous he was turned aside by the intercession of the god Brahma.

10. He proceeded accordingly to "turn the Wheel of the Law," or to preach to others, during the forty-five remaining years of his long life, the truths he had arrived at himself. The current lives speak, in their exaggerated manner, of his magnificent receptions by the kings whose countries he visited, and of the thousands of converts whom he made by his preaching, or who, in technical language, obtained Nirvana through him. His father and the other members of his family were among his followers. But among the first-fruits of his teaching were the five Brahmans who had abandoned him when he had relaxed in his ascetic habits. These, on first perceiving him, spoke of him with contempt as a glutton and a luxurious fellow spoilt by softness. But his personal presence filled them with admiration, and they at once acknowledged his perfect wisdom. During this time the two orders of monks and nuns, with their strict regulations enforcing continence and temperance, were founded. Gautama's aunt and nurse, Prajapati, was the first abbess; the Buddha, who had intended to exclude women from his order, having consented to admit them at her request. Rahula, his son, received the tonsure.

11. After he had firmly established his law in the hearts of many devoted disciples, the Buddha "entered Nirvana" at the age of eighty, at Kusinagara. That his death was deeply mourned by the friends who had hung upon his lips, and had drawn their knowledge of religious truth from him, need not be related.

12. A pompous account is given of his funeral rites, of which it will be sufficient to mention here that his body was laid upon a pyre, and burnt after the manner of burning in use for Chakravartins, or Universal Monarchs. The princes of Kusinagara wished to keep his relics to themselves; but seven kings, each of whom demanded a share, made threatening demonstrations against them, and after some quarrelling it was agreed to distribute the relics among the whole number. They were therefore divided into eight portions, the royal family of each country taking one. A dagoba, or monument, was erected over them in each of the capitals governed by these royal Buddhists.

Of the numerous stories that are told with regard to the effects of the Buddha's preaching, of the amazing miracles he is said to have performed, and of the wonders reported to have happened at his death and his cremation, there will be an opportunity of speaking in another place. For the present, it is enough to relate the legend of his life in its main features, according to the version piously believed by the millions of human beings who—in China, Tartary, Mongolia, Siam, Burmah, Thibet, and Ceylon—look to him as their lawgiver and their saviour.

SECTION IV.—ZARATHUSTRA.¹

Slaves, condemned to make bricks without straw, would hardly have a more hopeless task than he who attempts to construct, from the materials now before him, a life of Zarathustra. Eminent as we know this great prophet to have been, the details of his biography have been lost for ever. His name and his doctrines, with a few scattered hints in the Gâthâs, are all that remain on record concerning the personality of a man who was the teacher of one great branch of the Aryan race, and whose religion, proclaimed many centuries, possibly even a thousand years, before Christ taught in Galilee, was a great and powerful faith in the days when Marathon was fought, and is not even now extinct. We will gather from these fragmentary sources what knowledge we can of the Iranian prophet, but we will refuse to fill up the void created by the absence of historical documents with ingenious hypotheses or subtle speculations.

Something approaching to a bit of biography is to be found in the opening verses of the fifth Gâthâ, which are to this effect:—

“It is reported that Zarathustra Spitama possessed the best good; for Ahura Mazda granted him all that may be obtained by means of a sincere worship, for ever, all that promotes the good life, and he gives the same to all those who keep the words and perform the actions enjoined by the good religion.

“Thus may Kava Vistaspa, Zarathustra’s companion, and the most holy Frashaostra, who prepare the

¹ For an account of all that is to be made out concerning this prophet, see Haug’s *Parsees*, p. 250-264.

right paths for the faith which He who Liveth gave unto the priests of fire, faithfully honour and adore Mazda according to his (Zarathustra's) mind, with his words and his works !

“ Pourutschista, the Hetchataspadin, the most holy one, the most distinguished of the daughters of Zarathustra, formed this doctrine, as a reflection of the good mind, the true and wise one.”¹

Here we find an allusion to the interesting fact that Zarathustra had a daughter who contributed to the formation of the Parsee creed. The phrase, most distinguished of the daughters, probably does not mean that the prophet was the father of several daughters, but merely that this one was celebrated as his coadjutor. Spiegel has in vain endeavoured to discover the name of this lady's husband, but it seems to be doubtful whether anything is known of her matrimonial relations. The fact which it concerns us to notice is, that already in these primitive ages we have a female saint appearing on the scene. In addition to St Pourutschista, mention is made of two disciples, who were evidently leaders in the apostolic band. The evangelic ardour of Frashaostra is touched upon in the preceding Gâthâ, where it is stated that “he wished to visit my Highlands (*i.e.*, Bactria) to propagate there the good religion,” and Ahura Mazda is implored to bless his undertaking. Kava Vistaspa is celebrated in the same place as having obtained knowledge which the living Wise One himself had discovered.² The names of both are

¹ Yasna liii. 1-3. The translations contained in this section are taken either from Dr Haug's F. G., or his Parsees. Here and there I have ventured to amend his English without altering the sense.

² Ibid. li. 16, 17.—Parsees, p. 161.

well known, being frequently mentioned in the Gâthâs. They appear to have been intimate associates of the prophet. Thus a supposed inquiry is addressed to Zarathustra, "Who is thy true friend in the great work? who will publicly proclaim it?" and the answer is, "Kava Vistaspa is the man who will do this."¹ And Frashaostra is spoken of as having received from God, in company with the speaker (probably the prophet himself), "the distinguished creation of truth."² It is added, "for all time will we be thy messengers," or in other words, Evangelists.

Not only do we obtain from the Gâthâs a glimpse of Zarathustra attended by zealous disciples, eager to proclaim the good tidings he brought: we learn something also of the opposition he encountered from the adherents of the older faith. And since he actually names himself in the course of one of these compositions, which bears every appearance of genuineness and antiquity, we need not doubt the authenticity of the picture therein given of his relations to these opponents. They were the adherents of the old Devas, the gods whom Zarathustra dethroned;—polytheists, averse to this unheard-of introduction of monotheism into their midst. And they formed, at least during a part of the prophet's lifetime, possibly during the whole of it, by far the stronger party, for he refers to them in these terms:—

"To what country shall I go? where shall I take refuge? what country gives shelter to the master (Zarathustra) and his companion? None of the servants pay reverence to me, nor do the wicked rulers

¹ Yasna, xlv. 14.

² Ibid., xlix. 8.

of the country. How shall I worship thee further, living Wise One?

“I know that I am helpless. Look at me being amongst few men, for I have few men (I have lost my followers or they have left me); I implore thee weeping, thou living God who grantest happiness as a friend gives *a present* to his friend. The good of the good mind is in thy own possession, thou True One! . . .

“The sway is given into the hands of the priests and prophets of idols, who, by their *atrocious* actions, endeavour to destroy the life of man. . . .

“To him who makes this very life increase by means of truth to the utmost for me, who am Zarathustra myself, to such an one the first (earthly) and the other (spiritual) life will be granted as a reward together with all good things to be had on the imperishable earth. Thou, living Wise One, art the very owner of all these things to the greatest extent; thou, who art my friend, O Wise One!”¹

And elsewhere we come across this exclamation: “What help did Zarathustra receive, when he proclaimed the truths? What did he obtain through the good mind?”²

And the piteous question is put to Ahura Mazda: “Why has the truthful one so few adherents, while all the mighty, who are unbelievers, follow the Liar in great numbers?”³

These simple and natural verses point to a prophet who was—for a time at least—without honour in his own country. Whereas the later representations of his career depict him as the triumphant revealer of a

¹ Yasna. xlv. 1, 2, 11, 19.

² Ibid., xlix. 12.

³ Ibid., xlvii. 4.

new faith, before whose words of power the "Devas," or gods of polytheism, flee in terror and dismay, we meet with him here in the character of a persecuted and lonely man, unsupported by the authorities of his nation, opposed by a powerful majority, and imploring, in the distress and desolation of his mind, the all-powerful assistance of his God. Such is the reality; how widely it differs from the fiction we have already seen. But as is always the case with great prophets, who are rejected in their own days and honoured after their death, the reality is forgotten; the fiction is universally accepted.

Little need be said of the doctrines taught by Zarathustra. His main principle is belief in the one great God, Ahura Mazda, whom he substitutes for the many gods of the ancient Aryans. He was in fact the author of a monotheistic reformation. The worshippers of these deities are often referred to in opprobrious terms, more especially as "liars," or "adherents of lies," while the devotees of Ahura are spoken of as the good, or as those who are in possession of the truth. It is only through the spirit of lying that the godless seek to do harm; through the true and wise God they cannot do it.¹ This God, the friend of the prophet, is honoured in language of deep and simple adoration; not with the mere vapid epithets of praise which become common in the later sections of the Zend-Avesta. Zarathustra feels himself entirely under his protection, and describes himself as ready to preach whatever truths this great Spirit may instruct him to declare.

Beyond this great central dogma—which he an-

¹ Yasna, xlvii. 4.

nounces with all the fervour of a discoverer—there is nothing of a very distinctive kind in his theology. The doctrine of a separate evil spirit opposed to Ahura Mazda does not hold in the Gâthâs that place which it afterwards obtained in the sacred literature of the Parsees. Dr Haug considers that Zarathustra held merely a philosophical dualism, the two principles of existence—bad and good—being united in the supreme nature of the ultimate Deity. From this great and all-wise Being every good thing emanates. He is the inspirer of his prophet; the teacher of his people; the counsellor in the many perplexing questions that harass the minds of his worshippers. To him the pious soul resorts in trouble; by him both earthly possessions and spiritual life are granted to those who rightly seek him. Ahura Mazda is the true God; and there is no other God but Ahura Mazda.

SECTION V.—MAHOMET.¹

The last man who has obtained the rank of a prophet is Mohammed, or Mahomet, the son of Abdallah and Amina. Since his time none has succeeded in founding a great, and at the same time an independent religion. Many have wrought changes in pre-existing materials; but no one has built from the foundation upwards. The religion of Mahomet, though compounded of heathen, Judaic, and Christian elements, is not a mere reformation of any of the faiths in

¹ The source from which this notice is mainly drawn is Sprenger, "Das Leben und die Lehre des Mohammed," 3 vols. In addition to this I have consulted Muir's "Life of Mahomet;" Caussin de Percival, "Les Arabes;" Gustav Weil, "Mohammed der Prophet," and other works. The facts here stated will generally be found in Sprenger. The translations of Koranic passages are taken from Rodwell's Koran.

which these constituents were found. It depends for its original sanction upon none of these, but derives its *raison d'être* exclusively from the direct inspiration of its author.

This prophet was born at Mecca in 571, and was the posthumous child of Abdallah, by his wife Amina. His mother died when he was six years old, and he was then taken charge of by his grandfather Abd-al-Mottalib, who, dying in two years, left the child to the care of his son Abu Talib. Mahomet was poor, and had to work for his living in a very humble occupation. In process of time, however, he obtained a comfortable employment in the service of a rich widow, named Khadija, who was engaged in business, and whom he served in the capacity of commercial traveller; or at first perhaps in a lower situation. His mercenary relation to her was soon superseded by a tenderer bond. He married her in 595, she being then thirty-eight or thirty-nine years of age, and fifteen years older than himself. She was evidently a woman of strong character, and retained an unbroken hold upon the affection of Mahomet until her death in 619. He subsequently married many wives, of whom Ayisha was the most intimate with him; but none of them appears to have exercised so much influence upon his character as Khadija.

She it was who was the first to believe in the divine inspiration which her husband began to disclose in the year 612, at the mature age of forty; and she it was who encouraged and comforted the rising prophet during his early years of trouble and persecution. His first revelation was received by him in 612. It purported to be dictated by the angel

Gabriel, who was Mahomet's authority for the whole of the Koran.

“Recite thou,” thus spoke his heavenly instructor, “in the name of thy Lord who created ;—created man from clots of blood :—Recite thou ! For thy Lord is the most beneficent, who hath taught the use of the pen ;—hath taught man that which he knoweth not.”¹

After this first reception of the word of God, Mahomet passed through that period of extreme depression and gloom which appears to be the universal lot of thoughtful characters, and which Mr Carlyle has designated “the Everlasting No.” For many months he received no more revelations, and in his despondency he entertained a wish to throw himself down from high mountains, but was prevented by the appearance of the angel Gabriel. In time another communication came to strengthen him in his work ; and revelations now began to pour down abundantly. His earliest disciples, besides his wife and his daughters, were his cousin Ali, and the slave Zayd, whom he had adopted as a son. By and by he obtained other important converts, among whom were Abu Bakr, Zobayr, and Othman, afterwards the Chalif.

His earliest revelations were inoffensive to the Meccans ; and it was only when he began to preach distinctly the unity of God, the resurrection, and responsibility to the Deity, that opposition was aroused. Persecution followed upon disapproval. Some of Mahomet's followers were compelled to take refuge in Abyssinia, and he himself told the Meccans instructive legends of nations whom God had destroyed

¹ K., p. 1.—Sura xcvi.

for their wickedness in rejecting the prophets who had been sent to them. In 616, however, Mahomet was guilty of a relapse, for he published a revelation recognising three Meccan idols, Lat, Ozza, and Manah, as intercessors with Allah. In consequence of this concession to their faith, the Korayschites—his own tribe—fell down on their faces in adoration of Allah, and the exiles in Abyssinia returned to their native land. But the prophet was soon ashamed of the weakness by which he had purchased public support. The verse was struck out of the Koran, and the passing recognition of idolatry attributed to the suggestion of the devil. Tradition assigns to this occasion the following verses:—

“We have not sent any apostle or prophet before thee, among whose desires Satan injected not some wrong desire; but God shall bring to nought that which Satan had suggested. Thus shall God affirm his revelations, for God is Knowing, Wise! That he may make that which Satan hath injected, a trial to those in whose hearts is a disease, and whose hearts are hardened.”¹

After his renewed profession of Monotheism, Mahomet and his followers were naturally subjected to renewed persecution. Conversions, however, did not cease; and that of Omar, in 617, was of great importance to the nascent community. Yet matters were at last pushed to extremities by the unbelievers. Mahomet's family, the Haschimites, were excluded from all commercial and social intercourse by the other Korayschites, and compelled to withdraw into their own quarter. This state of quarantine probably lasted

¹ K. p. 593.—Sura xxii. 51, 52.

from the autumn of 617 to that of 619. At its conclusion Mahomet lost his wife Khadija, and his uncle Abu Talib, who had given him protection.

He was now exposed to many insults and much annoyance. The insecurity in which he lived at Mecca forced him to seek supporters elsewhere. Now the Caaba or holy stone at Mecca was the scene of an annual pilgrimage from the surrounding country. Mahomet made use of the advent of the pilgrims in 621 to enlist in his cause six inhabitants of Medina, who are reported to have bound themselves to him by the following vow:—Not to consider any one equal to Allah; not to steal; not to be unchaste; not to kill their children; not wilfully to calumniate; to obey the prophet's orders in equitable matters. Paradise was to be the guerdon of the strict observance of this vow, which from the place where it was taken was called the first Akaba. In the following year, 622, Mahomet met seventy-two men of Medina by night at the same ravine, and the oath now taken was the second Akaba. The believers swore to receive the prophet and to expend their property and their blood in his defence. Twelve of the seventy-two disciples were selected as elders, the prophet following therein the example of Christ.

A place of refuge from the hostility of their countrymen was now open to the rising sect. All the Moslems who were able and willing gradually found their way to Medina. At length none of the intending emigrants remained at Mecca but the prophet himself and his two friends Abu Bakr, and Ali. The designs of the Korayschites against Mahomet's life failed, and he effected his escape to a cave at some

little distance from Mecca, and in the opposite direction from Medina. Here he remained in concealment with Abu Bakr for three days, the daughter of the latter bringing food for both. After this time a guide brought three camels with which they proceeded in safety to Medina. The prophet reached Koba, a village just outside it, on the 14th of September 622. He remained here three days, and received the visits of his adherents in Medina every day. This was the celebrated Hegira, or flight, from which the Mussulman era is dated.

In the course of a year, the majority of the inhabitants of Medina had adopted Islam, and a little later those who remained heathens were either compelled or persuaded to embrace, or at least to submit to, the new creed and its apostle. The Jews alone retained their ancient religion. But while Mahomet was thus successful with Medina, he was still exposed to the bitter hostility of Mecca. War between the two cities was the result of the hospitality accorded to him by the former. Mahomet, who now united in his person the temporal and spiritual supremacy in his adopted home, did not shrink from the contest, but carried it on with vigour and success. In the year 624, having gone in pursuit of a Meccan caravan, he met the army of the Korayschites at Badr, and defeated them; although he had not much more than 300 men, while they commanded from 900 to 1000. In the following year indeed the Moslems were defeated in the battle of Ohod; but in 627 the siege of Medina, undertaken by Abu Sofyân at the head of 10,000 men, was raised after three weeks without serious loss on either side.

Notwithstanding the enmity of its inhabitants, Mecca still retained in the eyes of Mahomet and his disciples its ancient prerogative of sanctity. The Kibla, or point towards which the Moslem was to turn in prayer, had for a time been Jerusalem ; but Mahomet had restored this privilege to his native town two years after the Hegira. There too was the sacred stone, no less venerated by the pious worshipper of Allah than by the adherents of Lat, Ozza and Manah ; and thither it was that the religious pilgrimage had to be performed, for Mahomet had no intention of giving up this part of his ancestral faith. He was desirous in the spring of 628 of performing the pilgrimage to Mecca. The Koraish, however, came out to meet him with an army, determined to preclude his entrance to the city. The design was therefore abandoned ; but an important treaty was concluded between Mahomet and Sohayl, who acted as envoy from Mecca. By this compact both parties agreed to abstain from all hostilities for ten years ; Mahomet was to surrender fugitives from Mecca, but the Meccans were not to surrender fugitives from him ; no robbery was to be practised ; it was open to any one to make an alliance with either party ; Mahomet and his followers were to be permitted to enter Mecca for three days in the following year for the festival. After making this agreement Mahomet, yielding to circumstances, performed the ceremonies of the festival at Hodaybiya near Mecca, and then withdrew.

The treaty caused great dissatisfaction among the Moslems, as well it might ; and the humiliation was heightened when the prophet, shortly after making

it, was compelled to fulfil its provisions by giving up certain proselytes who had fled to him from Mecca. Nevertheless his power continued to grow, and a tribe residing near Mecca took advantage of the treaty to conclude an alliance with him.

Mahomet now began to place himself on a level with crowned heads. In 628 he had a seal made with the inscription upon it: "Mahomet the messenger of God." Furnished with this official seal, he despatched six messengers with letters to the Emperor Heraclius; to the King of Abyssinia; to the Shah of Persia; to Mokawkas, lord of Alexandria; to Harith the Ghassanite chief; and to Hawda in Yamama, a province of Arabia. The purport of all these missives was an exhortation to the various sovereigns and chiefs to embrace the new religion, and a promise that God would reward them if they did, with a warning that they would bear the guilt of their subjects if they did not.

In the same year Mahomet besieged the town of Chaybar, whose inhabitants were Jews. Many of them were killed; the rest were permitted to withdraw with their families. Kinana, their chief, was executed; and his wife Cafyya was added to the already numerous harem of the victor.

The following year, 629, witnessed the performance by the Moslems of the pilgrimage to Mecca for the first time since the Hegira. The prophet summoned those who had accompanied him to Hodaybiya the year before to go with him now. The Koreish, according to the stipulations of the treaty, left the city; the Moslems entered it, performed their devotions, and retired after three days. This

year was also marked by a signal victory over a Ghassanite chief, who had executed a Mussulman envoy.

In January 630, taking advantage of the invitation of an allied tribe who had quarrelled with Mecca, Mahomet quitted Medina with a large army for the purpose of taking that city. The exploit was facilitated by the desertion of the general of the Koreish, Abû Sofyân, who privately escaped to the Moslem camp and made his confession of faith. Next day the forces of the prophet entered Mecca with scarcely any resistance. In the following year he laid down the terms upon which the conquered city was to be dealt with. Abu Bakr, accompanied by 300 Moslems, was sent to Mecca as leader of the pilgrims. Ali was charged to make the proclamation to the people which is found in the 9th Sura of the Koran.

“An Immunity from God and his Apostle to those with whom ye are in league, among the Polytheist Arabs! (those who join gods with God). Go ye, therefore, at large in the land four months: but know that God ye shall not weaken; and that those who believe not, God will put to shame—And a proclamation on the part of God and his Apostle to the people on the day of the greater pilgrimage, that God is free from any engagement with the votaries of other gods with God as is his Apostle! If therefore ye turn to God it will be better for you; but if ye turn back then know that ye shall not weaken God: and to those who believe not, announce thou a grievous punishment. But this concerneth not those Polytheists with whom ye are in league, and who shall

have afterwards in no way failed you, nor aided anyone against you. Observe, therefore, engagement with them through the whole time of their treaty: for God loveth those who fear him. And when the sacred months are passed, kill those who join other gods with God wherever ye shall find them; and seize them, besiege them, and lay wait for them with every kind of ambush: but if they shall convert, and observe prayer, and pay the obligatory arms, then let them go their way, for God is gracious, merciful. If any one of those who join gods with God ask an asylum of thee, grant him an asylum, that he may hear the Word of God, and then let him reach his place of safety. This, for that they are people devoid of knowledge.”¹

Without quoting the proclamation at full length, we may observe that in substance the terms granted were these. Those of the heathen with whom treaties had been made were informed that they should be free for four months. These are the “sacred months” alluded to in the text, and which had always been observed as a time of truce by the heathen Arabs, but which Mahomet deprived of their privilege. After this period was past the Moslems might kill the heathens or take them prisoners wherever they might find them. With other heathens, with whom there was no treaty in existence, Allah announced that he would have nothing further to do. Moreover, the heathen were excluded by this proclamation from approaching the holy places of Mecca in future. “O believers!”—such are the words of this last decree—“only they who join

¹ K., p. 611.—Sura ix. 1-6.

gods with God are unclean! Let them not, therefore, after this year, come near the sacred Temple.”¹

The prophet was now at the climax of his power. All Arabia was his; both materially and spiritually subdued beneath his authority. The city of his birth, which had spurned him as one of her humble citizens, was now compelled to receive him as her lord. No triumph could be more complete; and it is a rare, if not a unique example, of a new religion being persecuted, imperilled, well-nigh crushed, rescued, strengthened, contending for supremacy, and supreme, within the lifetime of its founder. But that lifetime was now approaching its end. Mahomet in 632 celebrated the last festival he was destined to witness with the utmost pomp. He went with all his wives to Mecca, and thousands of believers assembled around him there. He preached to them from his camel. He sacrificed 100 camels. On the 8th of June 632, he expired in the hut of Ayischa of a remittent fever from which he had been suffering a short time.

The character of the prophet Mahomet is an open question. Between the glowing admiration bestowed upon him by Carlyle, and the sneering depreciation of Sprenger, there lie numerous intermediate possibilities of opinion. His sincerity, his veracity, his humanity, his originality, are all topics of discussion admitting of varied treatment. The old and simple method of treating Mahomet as an impostor scarcely merits notice. Among serious students of his life it may be pronounced extinct. But between positive imposture and a degree of truthfulness equal to that which

¹ K., p. 615.—Sura ix. 28.

all would concede to Confucius, or to Jesus, there are many degrees, and a man may be more or less sincere in many particulars which do not involve the fundamental honesty of his conduct. It is in such particulars that the character of Mahomet is most open to suspicion. Few, I believe, would be able to read the earlier Meccan Suras, instinct as they are with a spirit of glowing devotion to a new idea, without entire conviction of the sincerity of their author. Nor can we reasonably doubt that he himself fully believed in the inspiration he professed to receive. The Koran is written precisely in that loose, rambling, and irregular style, which would indicate that its author was above the laws of human composition. If (as is said by some) there is beauty in the original Arabic, that beauty entirely evaporates in translation. The man whose work it is gave utterance to the thoughts of the moment as they were borne in upon him, in his opinion by an external power. But while he no doubt conceived himself as the instrument of the divine being, it is also exceedingly probable that in his later life he abused the weapon which he had thus got into his possession. That is to say, instead of waiting patiently for the revelation, and allowing Allah to take his own time, he in all likelihood put forth as revealed whatever happened to suit the political purpose of the day, and that at whatever moment was convenient to himself. In other words, he may have become less of a passive, and more of an active agent in the composition of the Koran. Take, for example, the two following Suras, belonging to his earliest period, as specimens of the inspired poetic style:—
“ Say : O ye unbelievers ! I worship not that which ye

worship, and ye do not worship that which I worship ; I shall never worship that which ye worship, neither will ye worship that which I worship. To you be your religion ; to me my religion." "Say : He is God alone : God the eternal ! He begetteth not, and is not begotten ; and there is none like unto him."¹

Contrast these fervent exclamations with such a passage as this, from one of the latest Suras :—

"This day have I perfected your religion for you, and have filled up the measure of my favours upon you : and it is my pleasure that Islam be your religion ; but whoso without wilful leanings to wrong shall be forced by hunger to transgress, to him, verily, will God be indulgent, merciful. They will ask thee what is made lawful for them. Say : Those things which are good are legalised to you, and the prey of beasts of chase which ye have trained like dogs, teaching them as God hath taught you. Eat, therefore, of what they shall catch for you, and make mention of the name of God over it, and fear God : Verily, swift is God to reckon : This day, things healthful are legalised to you, and the meats of those who have received the Scriptures are allowed to you, as your meats are to them. And you are permitted to marry virtuous women of those who have received the Scriptures before you, when you shall have provided them their portions, living chastely with them without fornication, and without taking concubines."²

The doctrine of direct inspiration, applied to matters like these, is almost a mockery. Yet Mahomet may have continued to think that God assisted him in the task of laying down laws for the believers,

¹ K., pp. 12, 13.—Suras cix., cxii.

² K., p. 632.—Sura v. 5-7.

and we cannot accuse him of positive insincerity, even though his revelations were no longer the spontaneous outpourings of an overflowing heart.

A more difficult question is raised when we inquire how much of his teaching was borrowed from others, and whether there was any one who acted as his prompter in the novel doctrines he announced. Now there is evidence enough, some of it supplied by the Koran itself, that Mahomet was preceded by a sect called Hanyfites, who rejected the idolatry of their countrymen, and held monotheistic doctrines. He spoke of himself as belonging to this sect, of which the patriarch Abraham was considered the representative and founder. Abraham is referred to in the Koran with the epithet "Hanyf," and as one of those who do not join gods with God.¹ A dozen or so of the contemporaries of the prophet renounced idolatry before him, and were Hanyfites. Three of these became Christians, and a fourth, by name Zayd, professed to be neither Jew nor Christian, but to follow the religion of Abraham. Zayd was acknowledged as his forerunner by Mahomet himself. But besides these sources of conversion which lay open to the prophet, it is plain from the Koran itself that he had had much intercourse with a person (or persons) of the Jewish faith. Mahomet was not a scholar, and his continual allusions to events in Jewish history plainly indicate a personal source. Moreover, the narratives are given in that somewhat perverted form which we should expect to find if they were derived from loose conversation rather than from study. His belief in

¹ *E.g.*, Sura iii. 89; vi. 162; xvi. 121.

the unity of God is not therefore a peculiarity which cannot be explained by reference to the circumstances in which his youth was passed. What was original with him was not the doctrine so much as the intensity with which it took possession of his mind, and the fervour which allowed him no rest until he had done his best to impart to others the profound conviction he entertained of this great truth.

Mahomet in fact began his public career as a simple preacher. The resistance he met with at home, and the necessity of relying for self-preservation on the swords of the men of Medina, converted him from a prophet to a potentate. The change was not one which he could avoid without sacrificing all chances of success; but it does appear to have exercised an unfortunate influence upon his character. As the governor of Medina he became tyrannical and even cruel. Among the worst features of his life is his conduct to the Jews after his attempts at conciliation had been shown to be fruitless. For instance, a Jewish tribe, the Banu Kaynoka, with whom a treaty of friendship had been concluded, were expelled from Medina. Another tribe of the same religion, the Banu Nadhyr, were blockaded in their quarter, and driven to capitulate, on condition of being allowed to leave Medina with their movable property. On the very day upon which the siege by Abû Sofyân in 627 came to an end, Mahomet blockaded the Banu Koraytza, also Jews, and compelled them to surrender at discretion. All the men, 600 in number, were put to death, and the women were sold as slaves; a punishment which, even on the supposition that the tribe was hostile to the prophet, was unpardonably

severe. In the ensuing year he marched against Chaybar, a town inhabited by Jews, besieged and took it. All the Jews taken in arms were put to death, whereupon the rest surrendered on condition of being permitted to withdraw with their families and their portable goods, exclusive of weapons and the precious metals. Kinana, their leader, was executed, and it is a suspicious circumstance that Mahomet married his widow Cafyya. Nor were these the worst of the prophet's misdeeds. He even stooped to sanction, if not to order, private assassination. Shortly after his victory at Badr, a woman and an old man, both of whom had rendered themselves offensive by their anti-Mussulman verses, were murdered in the night; and in both instances the murderers received the protection and countenance of the prophet and his followers.

Unbridled authority had in fact corrupted him. All those who did not adhere to his cause committed in his eyes the crime of opposing the will of God. To a man empowered by a special commission like his, the ordinary restraints of morality could not apply. Hence also, if he required a larger number of wives than was permitted to any other Moslem, a special revelation was produced to justify the excess. This was one of the weakest points in the prophet's character. Instead of setting an example to the community, he was driven to justify his self-indulgence by means which were nothing short of a perversion of religion to his own ends. There would have been nothing reprehensible, considering his age and country, in his indulgence in polygamy, had he observed any kind of moderation as to its extent. Where he

happened to take a fancy to a woman, and that woman did not object to him, the moral sense of his countrymen would not have been revolted by his taking her to wife. But it was revolted by the unrestricted freedom with which he added wife to wife, and concubine to concubine; a freedom so great as to degenerate into mere debauchery. He married women whom he had never seen, and who were sometimes already married. Mere beauty seems to have justified in his own eyes the addition of a new member to his harem, and there could be no pretence of real affection in the case of the women whom, without previous acquaintance, he took to his matrimonial bed. Exclusive of Khadija, the total number of his wives was thirteen, of whom nine survived him. He had also three concubines.

That his procedure sometimes scandalised the faithful is shown by the necessity he felt of defending it by the pliant instrument of revelation. Not only did he obtain from God a special law entitling him to exceed the usual number of wives; other peculiarities in his conduct were justified, either by an *ex post facto* decision applicable to all, or by an appeal to his extraordinary rights in his character of prophet. He had, for example, conceived a desire to possess Zaynab, the wife of his adopted son Zaid. Zaid obligingly divorced her, and received the greatest favour from the prophet for this friendly conduct. Zaynab made it a condition of her compliance that the union with Mahomet should be sanctioned by revelation, and this sanction was of course procured. Marriage with an adopted son's wife was somewhat shocking, and the

following reference in the Koran indicates the manner in which this affair was regarded :

“And, remember, when thou saidst to him unto whom God had shown favour [*i.e.*, to Zaid], and to whom thou also hadst shown favour, ‘Keep thy wife to thyself, and fear God ;’ and thou didst hide in thy mind what God would bring to light, and didst fear man ; but more right had it been to fear God. And when Zaid had settled concerning her to divorce her, we married her to thee, that it might not be a crime in the faithful to marry the wives of their adopted sons, when they have settled the affair concerning them. And the behest of God is to be performed. No blame attacheth to the prophet where God hath given him a permission.”¹

In another case he wished to induce a cousin, who was already married, though only to a heathen husband living at Mecca, to become his wife ; but she, believer as she was, refused to be untrue to her conjugal duties. He permitted himself also to accept the love of women who simply surrendered themselves to him without the sanction of their relations, conduct which placed them in a highly disadvantageous position, since in case of dismissal by her husband, a woman thus informally married was not entitled to the dowry which other married women would receive, nor could she claim the protection of her family. “Among the heathen Arabs,” observes Sprenger, “a man who accepted such a favour would have been killed by the woman’s family.”² But for the case of the cousin and for the case of such obliging female devotees the Koran had its suitable provisions :—

¹ K., p. 566.—Sura xxxiii. 38, 39.

² L. L. M., vol. iii. p. 84.

“O Prophet! we allow thee thy wives whom thou hast dowered, and the slaves whom thy right hand possesseth out of the booty which God hath granted thee, and the daughters of thy uncle, and of thy paternal and maternal aunts who fled with thee to *Medina*, and any believing woman who hath given herself up to the prophet, if the prophet desired to wed her—a privilege for thee above the rest of the faithful. . . . Thou mayest decline for the present whom thou wilt of them, and thou mayest take to thy *bed* whom thou wilt, and whomsoever thou shalt long for of those thou shalt have before neglected; and this shall not be a crime in thee. Thus will it be easier to give them the desire of their eyes, and not to put them to grief, and to satisfy them with what thou shalt accord to each of them. God knoweth what is in your hearts, and God is knowing, gracious.”

By a combination of qualities which is not uncommon, he added to an unrestricted licence in his own favour an equally unrestricted jealousy concerning others. He could not bear the thought that any other man might possibly enjoy one of his wives even after his death. His followers were told that they “must not trouble the Apostle of God, nor marry his wives, after him, for ever. This would be a grave offence with God.” In the same paltry spirit he orders them, when they would ask a gift of any of his wives, to ask it from behind a veil. “Purer will this be for your hearts and for their hearts.” Lest any stranger should trouble this uneasy husband by obtaining a sight of his wives’ naked faces, he required them invariably to wear a veil in public, and never to expose themselves

unveiled except to near male relations, slaves, or women.¹

Texts like these exhibit the degeneracy of the prophet's character in his later days. He wanted the stimulus of adversity to keep him pure. But he had done his work, and that work was on the whole a good one. Not indeed that there was anything very original or striking in the doctrines he announced. The Koran rings the changes on the unity of God, his power, his mercy, and his other well-known qualities; on the resurrection, with its delights for the faithful and its terrible judgments for the wicked; and on the vast importance of belief in the prophet and submission to his decrees. But this religion, though containing no elements that did not already exist in its two parents, Judaism and Christianity, was an improvement on the promiscuous idolatry which it superseded. It was less sensual and more abstract; and its moral tone was higher. Greater still than the improvement in the creed of the Arabs was the improvement in their material *status*. Unity of faith brought with it unity of action. From a number of scattered, independent, and often hostile tribes, the Arabs became a powerful and conquering nation. Other peoples were in course of time converted, and the religion of Mahomet was in the succeeding centuries carried in triumph over vast districts where the name of Christ had hitherto reigned supreme. Districts of heathen Africa have also accepted it. Were the prophet able to speak to us now, he would be entitled to say that the manifest blessing of Allah had rested upon the

¹ K., p. 569.—Sura xxxiii. 51, 53, 55.

work he had begun in obscurity and persisted in through persecution; and that the partiality of heaven was evident from the fact that Christianity had never succeeded, and had no prospect of succeeding, in regaining the vast territory in Europe and in Africa from which Islam has expelled it.

SECTION VI.—JESUS CHRIST.

When we endeavour to write the life of Jesus Christ, the greatest of the prophets, we are beset by peculiar difficulties arising from the nature of the materials. While in the case of the Buddha we receive from authorities a life which, though largely composed of fiction, is at least uniform and consistent, in the case of Jesus we have biographies from several sources, all of them partly historical, partly legendary, and each in some respects at issue with all the rest. Hence the labour of sifting fact from fiction, as also that of reproducing and classifying the fictitious element itself, is far more difficult. In sifting fact from fiction we have to judge, among two, three, or four versions of an occurrence, which is likely to be the most faithful statement of the truth, and within this statement itself how much we may accept, how much we must reject. And in reproducing and classifying the fictitious element we have not merely to relate a simple story, but to combine into our narrative varying, and sometimes conflicting, forms of the same fundamental myth.

Hence further subdivision will be needed in the case of Jesus than was requisite in treating the lives of any of the other prophets. We may in fact

discern in the gospels three distinct strata: a stratum of fact; a stratum of miracle and marvel; and a stratum (in John) of mere imagination *within* the realm of natural events. Correspondently to these divisions in the sources we will treat Jesus first as historical; secondly, as mythical; thirdly, as ideal. The historical Jesus is the actual human figure who remains after abstraction has been made of the miraculous and legendary portions of his biography. The mythical Jesus, who is found in the three first gospels, is the human subject of legendary narratives; the ideal Jesus, who is found in John, is a completely superhuman conception.

Finally, it may be needful to remark that the names affixed to the several gospels are merely traditional, and that in using them as a brief designation for these works, no theory as to their actual authorship is intended to be implied. The gospels (excepting perhaps the fourth) were the work of many authors, though ultimately compiled and edited by a single hand. Who this editor was is of little moment; and who the original authors were we never can discover. So that the gospels are to all intents and purposes anonymous; but it will be convenient, after noting this fact, to continue to describe them by their current titles.

SUBDIVISION I.—*The Historical Jesus.*

In attempting to sketch the outline of the actual life of Jesus—and anything more than an outline must needs be highly conjectural—there are some general principles which it is advisable to follow. Recollect-

ing that we have to deal with biographers who have mingled in promiscuous confusion the supernatural with the natural, impossibilities with probabilities, fables with facts, it becomes our duty to endeavour to separate these heterogeneous elements according to some consistent plan. That this can ever be perfectly accomplished is not to be expected. The figure of Jesus must ever move in twilight, but we may succeed in reducing the degree of unavoidable obscurity.

The first of the maxims to be observed will be furnished by a little consideration of the kind of thing likely to be the earliest committed to writing, as also to be the most accurately handed down by tradition. This, it appears to me, would be sayings, rather than doings. Nothing in the life of Jesus is more characteristic and remarkable than his oral instruction ; this would impress itself deeply upon the minds of his hearers, and nothing, we may fairly conjecture, would be so soon committed to writing either by them or by their followers. Moreover, the records of discourses and parables would be, in the main, more accurate than those of events ; slight differences in the words attributed to a speaker being (except in special cases) less material than divergences in the manner of portraying his actions. Historical confirmation of this hypothesis is not wanting. There is the well-known statement of Papias that Matthew wrote down the "sayings" of Christ in Hebrew [Syro-Chaldaic]. And if we look for internal evidence, we find it in the far greater agreement among the synoptical gospels as to the doctrines taught by Jesus than as to the incidents of his career. The

incidents bear traces of embellishment undergone in passing from mouth to mouth from which the doctrines are free. In some cases, moreover, there is concurrence as to the doctrines taught along with divergence as to the place where, and the circumstances under which, they were delivered. Added to which considerations there is the all-important fact that the events in the life of Christ are often of a supernatural order, while his discourses (excepting those in John) present nothing irreconcilable with his position in regard either to his epoch, his presumable education, or his nationality.

Giving this preference to sayings in general, over doings in general, we may next establish an order of preference among doings themselves. Of these, some are natural and probable; others unnatural and improbable; others again supernatural and impossible. The first kind will, of course, be accepted rather than the second; while the third kind must be rejected altogether. And as a corollary from this general principle, it follows that where one narrative gives a simpler version than another of the same event or series of events, the simpler version is to be preferred.

A third rule of the utmost importance is that when any statement is opposed, either directly or by its implications, to subsequent tradition, that statement may be confidently received. For when the whole course of opinion in the Christian Church has run in a given direction, the preservation in one of our Gospels of an alleged or implied fact conflicting with the established view, is an unmistakable indication that the truth has been rescued from destruction in

a case where succeeding generations would gladly have suppressed it.

A fourth maxim, which is likely to be useful, is that wherever we can perceive traces of faults or blemishes in the character of Christ, we may presume them to have actually existed. For his biographers were deeply interested in making him appear perfect, and they would have been anxious wherever possible to conceal his weaknesses. Where, therefore, they suffer such human frailties to be perceived, their unconscious testimony is entitled to great weight. For although they themselves either do not see or do not acknowledge that what they record is really evidence of faultiness at all, yet it is plain that circumstances conveying such an impression to impartial minds are not likely to have been invented. The conduct ascribed to Jesus might be capable of justification from his peculiar mission or his peculiar conception of his duties, but admiring disciples would not wantonly burden him with a load not rightly his. Yet this principle, though unquestionable in the main, must be tempered with the qualification that there are cases where his followers may have misunderstood and misrepresented him. It must be added that a similar presumption of truth attaches to the record of faults or blunders in the conduct of the disciples, whose characters their disciples were likewise anxious to exalt.

In the fifth place, it is a reasonable supposition that the less complete the outline of the life of Jesus contained in any Gospel, the more authentic is that Gospel. Gaps in the story told by one writer which, in another writer, have been filled up, are strong

indications of actual gaps in the life as known to the first Christians. While it is true that the compiler of one Gospel might, from ignorance or from design, omit some historical fact which the compiler of another would insert, yet it is unlikely that whole years would be passed over in silence, or remarkable events left out, where any genuine knowledge of those years or those events was possessed by the biographer. But nothing is more natural than that a space, subsequently felt to be a serious and almost intolerable void, should in process of time be removed by the exercise of the imagination craving to fill the empty canvas with living figures. Nor even where there is no positive blank, is it surprising that many actions conformable to the notion formed of Christ should be fitted into his career, and made to take their places alongside of others of a more unquestionable nature. We shall therefore prefer the scantiest account of the life of Jesus to the fullest.

A careful comparison of the three first Gospels—which alone can pretend to an historical character—will establish the fact that the second, ascribed to Mark, is the most trustworthy, or to speak accurately, the least untrustworthy, according to these canons. For, in the first place, it absolutely omits many of the most noteworthy events comprehended by the other Gospels in the life of Jesus. Secondly, it sometimes gives a natural version of a circumstance which appears in the others as supernatural; or a comparatively simple version of a circumstance which the others have converted into something mystical. It surpasses the others in statements, and still more in omissions, implying divergence from well-

established subsequent tradition ; and in general the far greater scantiness of detail, the failure to fill up blanks as the other Evangelists have done, the almost fragmentary character of this Gospel, are points telling largely in its favour. That, however, we have the earliest, or anything approaching the earliest form of the life of Jesus in Mark, it would be a great error to assume. As much as Mark differs from Matthew and Luke, so much at least did the primitive story differ from his, and in the same direction. Nay, it must have differed far more, for by the time the second Gospel was committed to its present form, a cloud of marvels had already surrounded the person of Jesus, and obscured his genuine figure. Through the mist of this cloud we must endeavour to discern such of his lineaments as have not been totally and for ever hidden from our scrutinising gaze.

Very little is known of the parents of Jesus, and even that little has rather to be inferred from casual references than gathered from direct statements. Joseph, his father, was a carpenter or builder, but his status is nowhere clearly defined. He and his family appear, however, to have been well known in their native country, and he was probably, therefore, not a mere workman, but a tradesman in comfortable circumstances.¹ At any rate, he was the father of a considerable family, consisting of five sons and of more than one daughter.² The names of the brothers

¹ The author of "The Messiah" (London, 1872) contends that he was not only a master builder, but the principal builder of Nazareth. His remarks on this subject (pp. 91 ff.) deserve consideration, though they are not conclusive.

² Mt. xiii. 55, and xii. 46 ; Mk. vi. 3, and iii. 31 ; Lu. viii. 19.

of Jesus,—James, Joses, Simon, and Judas,—have been preserved, while those of his sisters are unknown.

Whether there is not some confusion here, may indeed be doubted, for we hear also of another Mary, the mother of James and Joses,¹ and it is possible (as M. Renan supposes), that the names of her children have been substituted for those of the genuine brothers of Christ, which had been forgotten. Paul certainly mentions James, the Lord's brother,² and it would be natural to interpret this literally. But the question does not admit of any positive decision. Of the actual existence, however, of both brothers and sisters there can be no reasonable doubt; for they are spoken of as personages who were familiar to their neighbours, while the very fact that they play no part in the subsequent history is a guarantee that they have not been invented for a purpose. Little is known of his mother Mary, her genuine form having been transfigured at a very early period by the Christian legend. The first and third Gospels have made her the subject of a story which would force us—if we accept it at all—to consider Jesus as her illegitimate child, born of some other father than Joseph. But there is no adequate ground to ascribe to her such laxity of conduct. For aught we can discern to the contrary, she seems to have borne a fair reputation among her countrymen, who undoubtedly, according to the incidental and therefore unbiassed testimony of all four Evangelists, believed Jesus to have been the son of Joseph, begotten, like the rest of his family, in wedlock.³

¹ Mk. xv. 4c ; Mt. xxvii. 56.

² Gal. i. 19.

³ Mt. xiii. 55 ; Mk. vi. 3 ; Lu. iv. 22 ; Jo. vi. 42.

Beyond the fact that Joseph and Mary occupied a respectable position in Nazareth, we can say little of them. The lineage of both was plainly unknown to the compilers of the Gospels, since Joseph has been endowed with two different fathers, while the parentage of Mary has not even been alluded to. All that we can venture to assert is, that neither of them were reputed to be of the family of David, for Jesus took pains to prove that the Messiah need not, as was commonly believed, be descended from that monarch.¹ There would have been no occasion for his ingenious suggestion that David, by calling the Messiah Lord, disproved the theory that this Lord must be his son, unless he had felt that his belonging to a family which could not claim such a pedigree might be used as an argument against his Messianic character. We may confidently conclude then that his lineage was obscure.

That his birth took place at Nazareth is abundantly obvious from the very contrivances resorted to in Matthew and Luke to take his parents to Bethlehem for that event. According to either of these narratives one fact is plain : that the habitual dwelling-place of the family was Nazareth ; while Matthew has preserved the valuable information that he was called a Nazarene,² a statement which is confirmed by the manner in which he is alluded to in John, as "Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph."³ Jesus therefore passed in his lifetime for a native of Nazareth, and as it does not appear that he ever contradicted the current assumption, as moreover the only two autho-

¹ Mt. xxii. 41-46 ; Mk. xii. 35-37 ; Lu. xx. 41-44.

² Mt. ii. 23.

³ Jo. i. 45.

rities which are at issue with this assumption are also at issue with one another on all but the bare fact of the birth at Bethlehem, we need not hesitate to draw the inference that he was born at Nazareth.

In his youth the son of Joseph was apprenticed to his father's trade, and he may have practised it for many years before he took to his more special vocation of a public teacher. He was at any rate known to his neighbours as "the carpenter,"¹ and his abandonment of that calling for one in which he seemed to pretend to a position of authority over others, caused both astonishment and indignation among his old acquaintances.

His public career was closely preceded by that of an illustrious prophet, by whom he must have been profoundly influenced—John the Baptist. Very little of the doctrine of John has been preserved to us, his fame having been eclipsed by that of his successor. But that little is sufficient to evince the great similarity between his teaching and that of Jesus. He was in the habit of baptizing those who resorted to him in the Jordan, and of inculcating repentance, because the kingdom of heaven was at hand.² Now precisely the same tone was adopted by Jesus after the captivity of John. Repentance was inculcated on account of the approaching advent of the kingdom of heaven, and a mode of instruction similar to that of John was practised. Both these prophets, affected no doubt by the troubled condition of Judæa, enjoined the simple amendment of the lives of individuals as the means towards a happier state of things. Both attracted

¹ ὁ τέκτων, a term which I render in the accepted manner (Mk. vi. 3).

² Mt. iii. 2.

crowds around them by the force and novelty of their preaching. Jesus, according to a probable interpretation of the narrative, was so much impressed by the lessons of his predecessor, and by the baptism received from him, that he for a time retired to a solitary place, living an ascetic life, and pondering the stirring questions that must have burnt within him. During this retirement Jesus could mature his designs for the future, and on emerging from it he was able at once to take up the thread of John the Baptist's discourses. Possibly John himself had perceived the high capacity of the young Nazarene, and had appointed him to the prophetic office. But the story of his baptism by John has been unfortunately so surrounded with mythical circumstances, that the true relations between these teachers can no longer be discerned.

Meditating in the wilderness on the words of John the Baptist, and on the state of his country, the notion may have entered the mind of Jesus that he himself was the destined Messiah. While the power he felt within him may have given birth to the idea, the idea once born would react upon his nature and increase the power within him. But whether the conception of his own Messiahship arose now or at some other period, it is plain that he was animated by it during his public career, and that it gave to all his teaching its peculiar tone of independent authority. How far he was completely convinced of his own claim to the Messianic title will be considered in another place; it is sufficient to say here that he was plainly anxious that this claim should be acknowledged, and the rights it conferred upon him recognised.

On emerging from his retreat, he began the public

promulgation of his doctrines ; at first, however, with caution and reserve, and keeping within the lines marked out by John the Baptist. Attracted by the young enthusiast, a select band of followers gathered around him, and while he inspired them with implicit trust, they no doubt inspired him in their turn with higher confidence. The reticence which modesty or hesitation had produced gradually melted away, and he began boldly to put forth pretensions which, while they repelled and scandalised many, drew others into a closer companionship and a more implicit submission. Simon and Andrew, James and John, were the first, or among the first, of his disciples. Eight others joined him at about the same period of his life, their names being Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James the son of Alphæus, Thaddæus, Simon the Canaanite, and Judas.¹ While these formed the inner circle, we must suppose that he had many other admirers and followers, who were either less intimate with him, or less constant in their attendance. And there may even have been others of equal intimacy with the twelve apostles, whose names have not been handed down to us. For all the apostles did not enjoy an equally close and unreserved friendship with their master. Three of their number—Simon, James, and John—stood towards him in an altogether special and peculiar relationship. They are far more prominent than any of the other nine. They were selected to accompany Jesus when others were left behind. They formed an inmost circle within the circle of his more constant companions. Them alone he is said to have distinguished by names of his own invention.

¹ Mk. iii. 14-19; Mt. x. 1-4.

On Simon he conferred the name of Peter. To James and John, the sons of Zebedee, he applied the familiar nickname of Boanerges, or sons of thunder, which seems to indicate that they were distinguished by the fervour of their zeal.¹

The admirers of Jesus were scarcely, if at all, less numerous among the female than among the male sex. Indeed, he seems to have exercised a very marked fascination over women. When he went to Jerusalem, he was followed by many women from Galilee, who had been accustomed to contribute to his wants, and to give him that personal attention which kindly women know so well how to confer. Mary Magdalene whom he had healed of some mental ailment, Mary the mother of James, Salome the mother of the sons of thunder, were among the most devoted of these, while two sisters, Mary and Martha, Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna, are also mentioned.² If we may believe one of the Evangelists, who stands alone in this respect, the homage of women was particularly agreeable to Jesus, who received it with words of the highest praise.³ That some among these many female followers were drawn to him by the sentiment of love is, at least, highly probable. Whether Jesus entertained any such feeling towards one of them it is impossible to guess, for the human side of his nature has been carefully suppressed in the extant legend.

Supported then by adherents of both sexes, Jesus entered upon his career of a public teacher. His

¹ Mk. iii. 16, 17.

² Mk. xv. 40, 41 ; Lu. viii. 2, 3, x. 38, 39.

³ Lu. vii. 36-50 x. 38-42.

own house was at Capernaum,¹ but he wandered from place to place in the exercise of his vocation, staying, no doubt, with friends and disciples. It is not necessary to follow him in these peregrinations, of which only the vaguest accounts have been preserved by the Evangelists. But two remarkable circumstances deserve to be noted; namely, that his own family rejected his pretensions, and that he met with no success in his own district. Of the former, in addition to the negative evidence furnished by the fact that neither Mary nor the brothers of Jesus are mentioned among the believers, we have the positive evidence of John that his brothers did not believe,² confirmed by the statement in the other Gospels that his family attempted to see him during the earlier part of his career, and that Jesus positively refused to have anything to do with them.³ This desire on the part of the family to confer with him, and the manner in which Jesus, disavowing all special ties, adopts all who "do the will of God" as mother, brother and sister, admits of but one construction. Mary and her other children were anxious to draw him away from the rash and foolish mode of life—as they deemed it—on which he had entered, and Jesus, understanding their design, avoided an unpleasant interview by simply declining to be troubled with them. And if, as is highly probable, it was they who thought him mad,⁴ we have further proof that neither his mother nor any of the other members of his family can be counted among his converts, at any rate during his lifetime. The second circumstance, his complete

¹ Mt. iv. 13.

² Mk. iii. 31-35; Mt. xii. 46-50; Lu. viii. 19-21.

³ Jo. vii. 5.

⁴ Mk. iii. 21.

failure in his own neighbourhood, is attested by a saying of his own, recorded by all four Evangelists. A prophet, he is reported to have said, is without honour in his own country, among his own kin, and in his own house.¹ To which it is added that he was unable to perform any work of power there, beyond curing a few sick people. And these cures evidently did not impress the sceptical Nazarenes, for we are told that "he marvelled because of their unbelief."²

Leaving, therefore, these hardhearted neighbours, he proceeded to address the people of Galilee and Judæa in discourses which excited great attention; sometimes inculcating moral truths in plain but eloquent language, sometimes preferring to illustrate them by little stories, the application of which he either made himself or left to his hearers to discover. Had these stood alone, they would have sufficed to give him a high reputation. But he did not depend on words alone for his success among the people. The peculiar condition of Palestine at this epoch gave him a favourable opportunity of supplementing words by deeds. The trials and sufferings they had undergone, both from the Herodian family and the Romans; the constant outrage to their deepest feelings afforded by the presence of an alien soldiery; the insults, humiliations, and cruelties they endured at the hands of their conquerors, had wrought the people up to a state of almost unbearable tension and extreme excitement. That under the pressure of such a state of things nervous disorders should be widely prevalent, is not to be wondered at. And

¹ Mk. vi. 4.

² Mk. vi. 5, 6.

these affections, as is well known, are peculiarly infectious, easily spreading through a whole village and raging in a whole country.¹ Hysteria, moreover, takes many forms. Now it may show itself as a species of madness; now as the imagination of some positive disease. Here it may be violent and outrageous; there morbid and gloomy. Another peculiarity is its tendency to increase the more, the greater the attention paid to it by friends and onlookers. To be an object of interest to those around is enough to inflame the symptoms of the hysterical patient. And when this interest took shape in a belief that he was inhabited by some bad spirit—which was equally the theory of the Jews in the time of Christ, and of Christians up to the middle ages—it was natural that the evil should be magnified to the highest degree. There are, however, some individuals who exercise a peculiar power over sufferers of this description. Their looks, their touch, their words, are all soothing. By addressing the victims of hysteria in tones of authority, by taking their hands, or otherwise endeavouring to calm their excited nerves, these physicians of nature may put a stop to the pain, or expel the illusion. In modern days they would be called mesmerists, and though the peculiarities of temperament to which they owe their mesmeric faculty are not yet understood, their influence is well known to those who have examined into the subject.

Among the Jews, the subjects of these current maladies were said to be possessed by devils. And it was a common profession to cast out these so-called

¹ See, for example, Hæcker's *Epidemics*, *passim*.

devils, for we are told that it was practised by the adherents of the Pharisees.¹ What means they employed we do not know. Probably they were not of the mesmeric order, but consisted in charms and exorcisms which, being believed by the patients to have the power of curing them, actually had it. At any rate, the fact remains that Jesus and the Pharisees are reputed to have possessed a similar influence over the demons, and if we accept the statement as true in the one case we cannot consistently reject it in the other. It remains to be considered, however, whether the evidence is such as to induce us to believe it in either. Now it is quite true that a great many absurd and impossible miracles are ascribed to Jesus in the Gospels. But considering the important place occupied in his life—as it has come down to us—by his cures of sick people; considering the possibility above suggested that many of these might have taken place by known methods; considering too the extremely easy field which Palestine presented for their application, it would appear more likely that there might be a basis of truth in the numerous accounts of sudden recoveries effected by him, than that they were all mere inventions. We may then assume, without here entering into details, that a number of unfortunate people, thought to be possessed by devils, either met him on his way, or were brought to him by relations, and were restored to health by the authoritative command addressed to the evil spirit to depart; mingled with the sympathetic tone and

¹ Lu. xi. 19. I use this verse, not as evidence that Jesus actually spoke the words ascribed to him, but that the practice of casting out devils was common to Jesus and the disciples (who, I presume, are meant by *οἱ*) of the Pharisees.

manner towards the tormented subject of possession. Individual examples of these apparently miraculous cures may be open to doubt from the very inaccurate character of the records, and for this reason it will be better for the present to admit the general fact without binding ourselves to this or that special instance of its occurrence.

Possessing this power himself, and ignorant of its source, Jesus attempted to communicate it to his disciples. It is expressly stated that he gave them power to heal sicknesses and cast out devils,¹ though it is doubtful whether they met with much success in this vocation. On one occasion, at least, a signal failure is reported, and as the fact stated redounds neither to the glory of Christ, who had appointed his disciples to the work, nor of the disciples who had received the appointment, we may believe it to be true.² A parent had brought his little son to the apostles to be delivered from some kind of fits from which he suffered. The apostles could do nothing with him. When Jesus arrived he ordered the spirit to depart, and the boy, after a violent attack, was left tranquil. We are not told indeed how long his calmness lasted, nor whether the fits were permanently arrested. For the moment, however, a remedy was effected, and the disciples naturally inquired why they had not been equally successful. The extreme vagueness of the reply of Jesus renders it probable that his remedial influence was due to some personal characteristic which he could not impart to others. This conclusion is confirmed by the noteworthy fact that an unknown person exercised the art of casting out devils in the

¹ Mk. iii. 15.

² Mk. ix. 14-29.

name of Jesus, though not one of his company.¹ Here the name would be valuable only because of its celebrity, the expulsion of the devils being due, as in the case of Jesus himself, to the personal endowments of the exorcist. At any rate, we have the broad facts that the Pharisees, Jesus himself, and the unknown employer of his name, were all proficient in the art of delivering patients from the supposed possession of evil spirits. Possibly too the apostles did the same, and it was certainly the intention of Jesus that they should.

Such exhibitions of power, though they might tend to strengthen the influence of Jesus among the multitude, were not the principal means on which he depended for acceptance. His sermons and his parables were both more remarkable and more original. In addition to the fact that he taught, in the main, pure and beautiful moral doctrines, he well knew how to exemplify his meaning by telling illustrations. The parables by which he enforced his views have become familiar to us all, and deserve to remain among our most precious literary possessions. What more especially distinguished his mode of teaching from that of other masters was the air of spiritual supremacy he assumed, and his total independence of all predecessors but the writers of Scripture. Not indeed that he ventured upon any departure from the accepted tradition with regard to the history of his nation, or the authority of the Old Testament. On the contrary, he was entirely free from any approach to a critical or inquiring attitude. But in so far he did not teach like the scribes, that he

¹ Mk. ix. 38-40.

boldly put forth his own interpretations of Scripture and his own views of ethics, without the smallest regard for the established opinions of the schools, and without seeking support from any authority but his own. In this course he was evidently strengthened by an inward conviction that he was the destined Messiah of the Jewish people. Deputed, as he conceived, directly from God, he could afford to slight the restrictions which others might place upon their conduct. He was not bound by the rules which applied to ordinary men.

This assumption, with its corresponding behaviour, could not fail to give great offence to those by whom his title was not conceded. And we accordingly find that he comes into constant collision with the recognised legal and religious guides of the Jews. Among the first of the shocks he inflicted on their sense of propriety was his claim to be authorised to forgive sins.¹ To the Jewish mind this pretension was highly blasphemous; no one, they thought, could forgive sins but God, and they did not understand the credentials in virtue of which this young man acted as his ambassador. Further scandal was caused by his contempt for the common customs observed on the Sabbath day,² which appeared to him inconsistent with the original purpose of that institution. The language he was accustomed to use to his disciples, and to his hearers generally, was not of a nature to soothe their growing animosity. Designating himself by the Messianic term of "the Son of man," he announced the approach, even during the generation then extant, of a kingdom of heaven wherein he

¹ Mk. ii. 7.² Mk. ii. 24, and iii. 6.

himself was to return clothed with glory, and his followers were to be gathered round him to enjoy his triumph. Along with these promises to his friends, there flowed forth indignant denunciation of the Pharisees and Scribes, who were held up to the scorn of the populace.

Having thus provoked them to the utmost, he imprudently accepted the honour of a sort of triumphal entry into Jerusalem, the pomp of which, however, has probably been somewhat exaggerated.¹ Nor was this all. He proceeded to an act of violence which it was impossible for the authorities to overlook. The current Roman money not being accepted at the temple, the outer court of this building was used by money-changers, who performed the useful and necessary service of receiving from those who came to make their offerings the ordinary coinage, and giving Jewish money instead of it. Doves being also required by the law to be offered on certain occasions, there were persons outside the temple who sold these birds. Indignant at what seemed to him a violation of the sanctity of the spot, Jesus upset the tables of these traffickers, and described them all as thieves. It is added in one account that he interfered to prevent vessels being carried through the temple.² That, after this, the spiritual rulers should ask him to produce his authority for such conduct, was not unnatural. Nor is it surprising that, after his unsatisfactory reply to their inquiry, they should take steps to prevent the repetition of similar scenes.

¹ Mk. xi. 1-11.

² Mk. xi. 15-17.

The efforts of the chief priests to bring about his destruction are described in two of our Gospels as the direct result of his proceedings about the temple, the impression he had made on the multitude being a further inducement.¹ Aware of the indignation he had excited, Jesus soon after these events retired into some private place, known only to his more intimate friends. So at least I understand the story of his betrayal. Either Judas never betrayed him at all, or he was lurking in concealment somewhere in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem. That the conduct attributed to Judas should be a pure invention appears to me so improbable, more especially when the history of the election of a new apostle is taken into account, that I am forced to choose the latter alternative. The representation of the Gospels, that Jesus went on teaching in public to the very end of his career, and yet that Judas received a bribe for his betrayal, is self-contradictory. The facts appear to be that Jesus ate the passover at Jerusalem with his disciples, and that immediately after it, conscious of his growing danger, he retired to some hidden spot where he had lived before, and where friends alone were admitted to his company. Judas informed the authorities of the temple where this spot was. They thereupon apprehended Jesus, and brought him before the Sanhedrim for trial.

So confused and imperfect is the account of this trial given by the Evangelists, that we are unable to make out what was the nature of the charge preferred against him, or of the evidence by which it was supported. It is clear, however, that the grava-

¹ Mk. xi. 18 ; Lu. xix. 48.

men of the accusation was that he had put forth blasphemous pretensions to be the Messiah, "the Son of the Blessed One." And this was supported by a curious bit of evidence. Two witnesses deposed, either that they had heard him say he *would* destroy this temple made with hands and build another made without hands within three days, or that he *was able* to destroy the temple, and to rebuild it in three days.¹ The witnesses are called false witnesses, both in Mark and in Matthew. But if we turn to John,² we find the probable source of the charge brought against him by these two witnesses, and we find reason also to think that they were not perjurers. There we are told that after he had driven the money-changers and traders from the temple, the Jews asked him for a sign that might evince his right to do such things. In reply to their demand, Jesus is reported to have said, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." Connecting this statement in the one Gospel with the evidence given on the trial according to the others, we may form a tolerably clear notion of the actual fact. Pressed by his opponents for some justification of his extraordinary conduct, Jesus had taken refuge in an assertion of his supernatural power. If they destroyed the temple he would be able, with the favour bestowed on him by God, to rebuild it in three days. These words might possibly be misconstrued by some of his hearers into a threat that he himself would destroy the temple, an outrage which would in their view have been less difficult to imagine after his violence to those engaged in business in its outer court. But whether so understood or not, there

¹ Mt. xxvi. 61 ; Mk. xiv. 58.

² Jo. ii. 19.

could be no question about the pretension to something like divinity in the promise to rebuild it in three days. There is not a shadow of probability in favour of the interpretation put upon the words in the fourth Gospel, that he spoke of the temple of his body. And even had that been his secret meaning, the witnesses who appeared against him could have no conception that he was thinking of anything but the material temple, to which the whole dialogue had immediate reference. They were therefore simply repeating, to the best of their ability, words which had actually fallen from the prisoner. The evidence for the prosecution being concluded, the high priest appealed to Jesus to know whether he had nothing to reply. Jesus being silent, the high priest proceeded to ask him directly whether he was "Christ, the Son of the Blessed One." Jesus answered that he was, and that they would hereafter see him "sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." Such an answer was an explicit confession of the very worst that had been alleged against him. After it, there was no option but to convict him, and we read accordingly that they all condemned him as worthy of death. But capital punishment could not be inflicted except by Roman authority. He was accordingly taken before the procurator, Pontius Pilatus, charged with the civil crime of claiming to be king of the Jews. Pontius appears to have regarded him as a harmless fanatic, and to have been anxious to discharge him, in accordance with a custom by which one prisoner was released at the festival which fell at this time. But the Jews clamoured for the release of a man named Barabbas,

who was in prison on account of his participation in an insurrectionary movement in which blood had been shed. Barabbas accordingly was set at liberty, and Jesus, though with some reluctance on the part of the procurator, was sentenced to crucifixion. The sentence was carried into effect immediately. Unable, probably from exhaustion through his recent sufferings, to carry his own cross, Jesus was relieved of the burden by one Simon, on whom the soldiery imposed the duty of bearing it. He was crucified along with two thieves, and an inscription in which he was entitled "King of the Jews" was placed upon his cross, apparently in mockery of the Jewish nation much more than of him. His ordinary disciples had fled in terror from his melancholy end, but he was followed to the cross by some affectionate women, who had previously attended him in Galilee. And after he was dead, his body was honourably interred by a well-to-do adherent, named Joseph of Arimathæa.

SUBDIVISION 2.—*The Mythical Jesus.*

The life of the mythical Jesus is found in the synoptical Gospels, but more especially in the first and third. It is by no means pure fiction, but an indistinguishable compound of fact and fiction, in which the fictitious elements bear so large a proportion that it is impossible to disentangle from them the elements of genuine history. Part of this life moreover is wholly mythical, and of this wholly mythical portion there are certain sections that are constructed on a common plan, the biographers in these sections having only fitted the typical incidents in the lives of

great men to the special case of Jesus, the son of Joseph. Not that this need have been done consciously ; the probability is that the circumstances and mode of thought which led to the invention of such typical incidents in the lives of others, led to it equally in that of Jesus. However this may be, we shall find in the mythical life of Jesus the following three classes of myths : 1. Myths of the typical order, common to a certain kind of great men in certain ages, and therefore purely unhistorical : 2. Myths peculiar to Jesus, in which the miraculous element so predominates, that it is impossible to recognise any, or more than the very slightest, admixture of history : 3. Myths peculiar to Jesus, in which there is a more or less considerable admixture of history : And, 4. Statements not of necessity mythical, which may or may not be historical, but of which the evidence is inadequate.

At the outset of our task we are met by the assumed genealogy of Jesus, which has caused some trouble to theologians, and which is mainly important as an indication of the degree of credit due to writers who could insert such a document. For these awkward pedigrees afford an absolute proof of the facility with which the Christians of the earliest age supplemented the actual life of Jesus by free invention. We are happily in possession of two conflicting lists of ancestors, and happily also they are both of them lists of the ancestors of Joseph, who, according to the very writers by whom they are supplied, stood in no relation whatever to Christ, the final term of the genealogies. Double discredit thus falls upon the witnesses. In the first place, both lists cannot be

true, though both may be false; one of them therefore must be, and each may be, a deliberate fiction. In the second place, both the Gospels bear unconscious testimony to the fact that Joseph was originally supposed to be, by the natural course of things, the father of Jesus, for otherwise why should the early Christians have been at the trouble to furnish the worthy carpenter with a distinguished ancestry? They thus discredit their own story that Jesus was the son of Mary alone. Either then Jesus was the son of Joseph, or neither of the two genealogies is his genealogy at all. The solution of these inconsistencies is to be found in the fact that two independent traditions have been blended together by the Evangelists. The one, no doubt the more ancient of the two, considered Jesus as the child of Joseph and Mary, and the ingenuity of his biographers has not succeeded in obliterating the traces of this tradition.¹ Another, and much later one, treated him as the offspring of Mary without the aid of a human father. Those who believed in the first and more authentic story had busied themselves with the discovery of a royal descent for their hero, in order that he might fulfil what they considered the conditions of the Messiahship. They had naturally traced his ancestry upwards from his father, not from his mother, according to the usual procedure. But the Gospels of Matthew and Luke were written entirely on the hypothesis that he had no father but God; all necessity for showing that Joseph was of the house of David was therefore gone. Nevertheless the writers or the editors of these Gospels did not like to

¹ Mt. xiii. 55.

neglect entirely what seemed to them to strengthen their case, and, forgetful of the ridiculous jumble they were making, inserted an elaborate pedigree of Joseph along with the statement that Jesus was not his son.

Let us now examine the genealogies in detail, placing them in columns parallel to one another. Luke begins a stage earlier than Matthew, making God his starting-point instead of Abraham. From Abraham to David the two authorities proceed together. Matthew, who has cut his genealogical tree into three sections of fourteen generations each, makes this his first division. After this the divergence begins:—

MATTHEW.	LUKE.
1. Solomon.	1. Nathan.
2. Rehoboam.	2. Mattatha.
3. Abia.	3. Menan.
4. Asa.	4. Melea.
5. Jehoshaphat.	5. Eliakim.
6. Joram.	6. Jonan.
<i>[Ahaziah.</i>	
<i>Joash.</i>	
<i>Amaziah.¹]</i>	
7. Ozias (or Uzziah).	7. Joseph.
8. Jotham.	8. Juda.
9. Ahaz.	9. Simeon.
10. Hezekiah.	10. Levi.
11. Manasseh.	11. Matthat.
12. Amon.	12. Jorim.
13. Josiah.	13. Eliezer.
<i>[Jehoiakim.]</i>	
14. Jeconiah (or Jehoiachin).	14. Jose.
Here the captivity closes the second period. After the captivity we have—	
1. Jeconiah.	15. Er.

¹ Kings omitted in the Gospel are inserted in brackets and italicised.

Matthew (*continued*)—
 2. Salathiel (or Shealtiel).
 3. Zerubbabel.
 4. Abiud.
 5. Eliakim.
 6. Azor.
 7. Sadoc.
 8. Achim.
 9. Eliud.
 10. Eleazar.
 11. Matthan.
 12. Jacob.
 13. Joseph.
 14. JESUS.

Luke (*continued*)—
 16. Elmodam.
 17. Cosam.
 18. Addi.
 19. Melchi.
 20. Neri.
 21. Salathiel.
 22. Zorobabel.
 23. Rhesa.
 24. Joanna.
 25. Juda.
 26. Joseph.
 27. Semei.
 28. Mattathias.
 29. Maath.
 30. Nagga.
 31. Esli.
 32. Naum.
 33. Amos.
 34. Mattathias.
 35. Joseph.
 36. Janna.
 37. Melchi.
 38. Levi.
 39. Matthat.
 40. Heli.
 41. Joseph.
 42. JESUS.¹

Various observations offer themselves on these discrepant genealogies. In the first place it will be observed that Matthew, in his anxiety to show that the whole period comprised is divisible into three equal parts of fourteen generations each, has actually omitted no less than four generations contained in the authorities he followed. For since he traced the descent of Joseph through the royal line of Judah, we are enabled to check his statements by reference to

¹ Mt. i. 1-17; Lu. iii. 23-38.

the Book of Chronicles,¹ and thus to convict him of positive bad faith. In the first instance he omits three kings, representing Uzziah as the son of Joram, who was his great great grandfather; in the second he passes over Jehoiachim, making Jehoiachin the son instead of the grandson of Josiah. In the third period we have no authority by which to verify his statements beyond Zerubbabel, but his determination to carry out his numerical system at all hazards is shown by the double reckoning of Jehoiachin, at the close of the second and beginning of the third division. The latter has in fact but thirteen generations, and it was only by this trick—a little concealed by the break effected through his allusion to the captivity—that the appearance of uniformity was maintained. Luke has adopted a different method. Leaving the line of kings, he connects Joseph with David through Nathan instead of Solomon. Now beyond the fact that Nathan was the offspring of David and Bathsheba, nothing whatever is known about him. Indeed it may have been his very obscurity, and the consequent facility of creating descendants for him, that led to his selection in preference to Solomon, though—unless it were that his name stood next above Solomon's²—there is no obvious reason for his being preferred to several other children of David. However, he answered the purpose as well as any, and after him it was not a difficult operation to invent a plausible list of names to fill up the gap between him and Joseph. The compiler of the list in Matthew had the advantage in so far that he did not require to

¹ 1 Chron. iii.

² 2 Sam. v. 14.

draw on his imagination except for nine names between Zerubbabel and Joseph, while the compiler of the list in Luke had to supply the whole period from Nathan downwards with forefathers. But the second compiler had the advantage over the first inasmuch as his fraud did not admit of the same easy exposure by reference to its sources, and it was, on the whole, a safer course to desert history altogether than to falsify it in favour of an arithmetical fancy.

Another discrepancy between the two writers remains to be noted; it is the enormous disproportion in the number of generations between David and Joseph. Matthew has twenty-five generations, and Luke forty, excluding Joseph himself. A difference of this magnitude—involving something like 400–450 years—is not to be surmounted by any process of harmonising. To which it may be added that the two Evangelists, by assigning to Joseph different fathers, clearly inform us that his true father was unknown.

We have here, in short, an excellent instance of the first order of myth, or myth typical. It has been a common practice in all ages, more especially among ignorant and uncultivated nations, to endow those who had risen from obscurity to greatness with illustrious ancestors. Royal connections have always been regarded with especial favour for such purposes. Thus, the Buddha is represented as the descendant of the great Sakya monarchs. Thus, the ancestors of Zarathustra, in the genealogy provided for him in Parsee authorities, were the ancient kings of Persia. Thus, Moslem biographers declare that Mahomet sprang

from the noblest family of the noblest nation, and many historians give him even a princely lineage.¹ Thus, according to Sir John Davis, "the pedigree of Confucius is traced back in a summary manner to the mythological monarch *Hoang-ty*, who is said to have lived more than 2000 years before Christ."² Thus the founder of Rome was placed by popular legend in a family relationship to *Æneas*.

Leaving these genealogies—which are important only from the light they shed on the literary character of their authors and transmitters—we pass to the first legend directly concerning Jesus himself, that of his birth. Here again the second and fourth Evangelists are silent, leaving us to suppose that Jesus was the natural son of Joseph and Mary, and certainly never hinting that they entertained any other belief themselves. But the first and third each relate a little fable on this subject, though unhappily for them the fables do not agree. Both had to observe two conditions. The first was that Jesus should be born of a virgin mother; the second that he should be born at Bethlehem. Matthew accomplishes this end by informing us that Mary, when espoused to Joseph, was found to be with child. Joseph, who thereupon contemplated the rupture of his engagement, was informed by an angel in a dream that his bride was with child by no one but the Holy Ghost; that she was to bear a son, and that he was to call him Jesus. Being satisfied by this assurance, he married Mary, but respected her virginity until she had brought forth her first-born son, whom in obedience to his dream he named Jesus.

¹ L. L. M., vol. i. p. 140.

² Chinese, vol. ii. p. 45.

The child was born in Bethlehem where it would appear from this account that Mary lived, and it is only after a journey to Egypt that this Gospel brings the parents of Christ to Nazareth, where a tradition too firm to be shaken placed their residence.¹

Widely different is the treatment of this subject in Luke. According to him there was a priest named Zacharias whose wife Elizabeth was barren. The couple were no longer young, but they were not old enough to have lost all hope of progeny, for we are told that when Zacharias was engaged in his duties in the temple, an angel appeared to him and informed him that his prayer was heard, and that his wife was to have a son whom he was to call John. Zacharias had therefore been praying for offspring, though when the angel—who announced himself as Gabriel—appeared, he was troubled with some impious doubts, in punishment of which he was struck dumb. After this Elizabeth conceived, and went into retirement. From five to six months after the above scene Gabriel was again despatched from heaven, this time to a virgin named Mary, living at Nazareth. Arrived at her house, he addressed her thus: “Hail, thou that art highly favoured; the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women.” Seeing Mary’s confusion, he reassured her; and informed her that she should have a son called Jesus, who was to possess the throne of David, and reign over the house of Jacob for ever. Like Zacharias, Mary was disposed to raise troublesome questions, and she accordingly inquired of Gabriel how she could bear a child, “seeing I know not a man.” But Gabriel was ready with his answer. The Holy Ghost would come

¹ Mt. i. 18-25 ; ii. 23.

upon her; moreover, her cousin Elizabeth had conceived (which, however, was not a parallel case), and nothing was impossible with God. Soon after this visit, Mary went to see Elizabeth, who interpreted an ordinary incident of pregnancy as a sign that the fruit of Mary's womb was blessed, and that Mary was to be the mother of her Lord. The virgin replied in a very elaborate little speech, which if uttered must have been carefully prepared for the occasion. In due time the child of Zacharias and Elizabeth was born, and named John by his parents' desire. What Joseph thought of his bride's condition we are not told, nor do we know whether she made known to him her interview with the angel Gabriel. At any rate he did not repudiate her, for we find him taking her with him, about five months later, to Bethlehem, for the purpose of the census which took place when Quirinus was governor of Syria, his descent from David requiring him to attend at that town. During this census it was that Jesus was born, and because of the crowded condition of the inn at this busy time, he was placed in a manger.¹ There let us leave him for the present, while we compare these narratives with others of a like description.

Birth in some miraculous or unusual manner is a common circumstance in the lives of great persons. We have here therefore another instance of the typical species of myth. Thus, in classical antiquity, Here is said to have produced Hephaistos *χωρὶς ἐννῆς*, "without the marriage bed."² Turning to a remote part of the globe, there was in the present century a person living in New Zealand who, according to native

¹ Lu. i. 1; ii. 7.

² Bib., i. 3-5.

tradition, was "begotten by the attua," a species of deity, "his mother being then unmarried. The infant was produced at her left arm-pit, but there was no visible mark left. . . . He is held as a great prophet; when he says there will be no rain there will be none."¹ An example of the same kind of legend occurs in the ancient history of China. The hero is one How-tseih, who was the founder of the royal house of Chow. His mother, it appears, was barren, like Elizabeth, for she "had presented a pure offering and sacrificed, that her childlessness might be taken away." Her devotion received a fitting reward, for :—

"She then trod on a toe-print made by God, and was moved,
In the large place where she rested.
She became pregnant, she dwelt retired;
She gave birth to, and nourished [a son],
Who was How-tseih."

His mode of coming into the world was peculiar too :—

"When she had fulfilled her months
Her first-born son [came forth] like a lamb.
There was no bursting, nor rending,
No injury, no hurt :—
Showing how wonderful he would be.
Did not God give her the comfort?
Had he not accepted her pure offering and sacrifice,
So that thus easily she brought forth her son?"²

The gestation of the Buddha was in many ways miraculous. He entered the womb of his mother by a voluntary act, resigning his abode in heaven for the purpose. At the time of his descent upon earth

¹ N. Z., p. 82.

² C. C., vol. iv. p. 465.—She King, Part iii. Bk. 2, i. 1, 2.

Mâyâ Dêvî dreamt that a white elephant of singular beauty had entered into her, a dream which portended the future greatness of the child.¹ During the time of his remaining in the womb, his body, which was visible both to his mother and to others, had a resplendent and glorious appearance.² “Mâyâ the queen, during the time that Boddhisattva remained in the womb of his mother, did not feel her body heavy, but on the contrary light, at ease and in comfort, and felt no pain in her entrails. She was nowise tormented by the desires of passion, nor by disgust, nor by trouble, and had no irresolution against desire, no irresolution against the thought of evil or of vice. She suffered the sensation neither of cold, nor of heat, nor of hunger, nor of thirst, nor of trouble, nor of passion, nor of fatigue; she saw nothing of which the form, the sound, the smell, the taste and the touch did not seem to her agreeable. She had no bad dreams. The tricks of women, their inconstancy, their jealousy, the defects of women and their weaknesses, she did not share.”³ And although it is never expressly stated that the Buddha’s nominal father had no part in his production, it is remarkable that at the time of her conceiving

¹ R. T. R. P., vol. ii. p. 61.

² Ibid., vol. ii. p. 73. It is very remarkable that the same notion is expressed in Christian paintings of the middle ages. On a painted glass of the sixteenth century, found in the church of Jouy, a little village in France, the virgin is represented standing, her hands clasped in prayer, and the naked body of the child in the same attitude appears upon her stomach, apparently supposed to be seen through the garments and body of the mother. M. Didron saw at Lyons a Salutation painted on shutters, in which the two infants, likewise depicted on their mothers’ stomachs, were also saluting each other. This precisely corresponds to Buddhist accounts of the Boddhisattva’s ante-natal proceedings.—*Id.* Chr. p. 263.

³ Ibid., vol. ii. p. 77.

Mâyâ was living in a place apart from him, having craved permission to retire for a season, to practise fasting and penance. During this time she had told the king that she would be “completely delivered from thoughts of stealing, desire and pride,” and that she would not “yield to one illicit desire.”¹ Some sects of Buddhists are more explicit, and maintain that Boddhisattvas do not pass through the earlier stages of foetal development; namely, those of *Kalalam*, mixing up, the period of the first week, when the future body is like milk; *arbudam*, the period of the second week, where a form rises like something inflated; *peci*, thickening; and *ghana*, hardening, the periods of the third and fourth week.² But all this does not exclude the co-operation of a human father. Passing to another great religion we find that even the sober philosopher Confucius did not enter the world, if we may believe Chinese traditions, without premonitory symptoms of his greatness. It is said that one day as his mother was ascending a hill, “the leaves of the trees and plants all erected themselves and bent downwards on her return. That night she dreamt the Black *Te* appeared, and said to her, ‘You shall have a son, a sage, and you must bring him forth in a hollow mulberry tree.’” In another dream she received a prophecy of the importance of her coming progeny.³ Another account states that “various prodigies, as in other instances, were the forerunners of the birth of this extraordinary person. On the eve of his appearance on earth, two dragons encircled the house, and celestial music sounded in the ears of

¹ R. T. R. P., vol. ii. pp. 54, 55.

² Wassiljew, p. 260.

³ C. C., vol. i. p. 59 (Proleg.)

his mother. When he was born, this inscription appeared on his breast—‘The maker of a rule for settling the world.’”¹ The mother of Mahomet is said to have related of her pregnancy, that she felt none of the usual inconveniences of that state; and that she had seen a vision in which she had been told that she bore in her womb the Lord and Prophet of her people. A little before her delivery the same figure appeared again, and commanded her to say, “I commend the fruit of my body to the One, the Eternal, for protection against the envious.”²

Miraculously born, it was necessary that Jesus should also be miraculously recognised as a child of no common order. The story would have been incomplete without some one to acknowledge his superhuman character even in his cradle. Matthew and Luke again accomplish the common end by widely different means. Luke’s is the simpler narrative, and it will be more convenient to begin with it. He tells us that there were in the same country, that is, near Bethlehem, shepherds watching their flocks. An angel appeared to them and said that a Saviour, Christ the Lord, was born in the city of David. They were to know him by his being in a manger wrapped in swaddling clothes. In this humility of his external circumstances immediately after birth, as in the supernatural recognition which he received, he again resembles the Chinese hero. How-tseih

“was placed in a narrow lane,
But the sheep and oxen protected him with loving care.

¹ Chinese, vol. ii. p. 44.

² L. L. M., vol. i. p. 142.

He was placed in a wide forest,
 Where he was met by the woodcutters.
 He was placed on the cold ice,
 And a bird screened and supported him with its wings."¹

"And suddenly," the narrative in Luke proceeds, "there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth the peace of good-will among men.'"² Similar demonstrations of celestial delight were not wanting at the birth of the Buddha Sakyamuni. He was received by the greatest of the gods, Indra and Brahma. All beings everywhere were full of joy. Musical instruments belonging to men and gods played of themselves. Trees became covered with flowers and fruit. There fell from the skies a gentle shower of flowers, garments, odoriferous powders, and ornaments. Caressing breezes blew. A marvellous light was produced. Evil passions were put a stop to, and illnesses were cured; miseries of all kinds were at an end.³ So also we read in Moslem authorities that at the birth of Ali, Mahomet's great disciple, and the chief of one of the two principal sects into which Islam is divided, "a light was distinctly visible, resembling a bright column, extending from the earth to the firmament."⁴ But let us complete the narrative in Luke.

Urged by the angelic order, the shepherds went to Bethlehem and found the infant Christ, whose nature, as revealed by the angels, they made known to the people with whom they met. Returning, they praised and glorified God for all they had heard and seen.⁵

¹ C. C., vol. iv. p. 468.—She King, Pt. iii. Bk. 2, i. 3.

² Lu. ii. 8-14.

³ R. T. R. P., vol. ii. pp. 90, 91.

⁴ Dervishes, p. 372.

⁵ Lu. ii. 15-20.

Quite dissimilar is the form in which the same incident appears in Matthew. Here, instead of shepherds, we have magi coming from the East to discover the King of the Jews. A star in the East had revealed to them the birth of this King of the Jews *de jure*, and in the search for him they run straight into the very jaws of Herod, the king *de facto*. The author is obliged to make them take this absurdly improbable course for the sake of introducing Herod, whom he required for a purpose shortly to be explained. How utterly superfluous the visit to Herod was is evinced by the fact that, after that monarch has found out from the chief priests the birthplace of the Messiah, the magi are guided onwards by the star, which had been omitted from the story since its first appearance in order to allow of their journey to Jerusalem, a mistake for which the star could not be made responsible. However, after leaving Herod, they were led by that luminary to the very spot where Christ lay. On seeing the infant they worshipped him, and offered him magnificent presents, after which a dream informed them—what their waking senses might surely have discovered—that it was not safe to return to Herod after having thus acknowledged a rival claimant to the throne. They accordingly went home another way.

Interwoven with this visit of the magi we have a myth which belongs to a common form, and which in the present instance is merely adapted to the special circumstances of the age and place. I term it the myth of THE DANGEROUS CHILD. Its general outline is this: A child is born concerning whose future greatness some prophetic indications have been

given. But the life of this child is fraught with danger to some powerful individual, generally a monarch. In alarm at his threatened fate, this person endeavours to take the child's life; but it is preserved by the divine care. Escaping the measures directed against it, and generally remaining long unknown, it at length fulfils the prophecies concerning its career, while the fate which he has vainly sought to shun falls upon him who had desired to slay it. There is a departure here from the ordinary type, inasmuch as Herod does not actually die or suffer any calamity through the agency of Jesus. But this failure is due to the fact that Jesus did not fulfil the conditions of the Messiahship, according to the Jewish conception which Matthew has here in mind. Had he—as was expected of the Messiah—become the actual sovereign of the Jews, he must have dethroned the reigning dynasty, whether represented by Herod or his successors. But as his subsequent career belied these expectations, the Evangelist was obliged to postpone to a future time his accession to that throne of temporal dominion which the incredulity of his countrymen had withheld from him during his earthly life.¹

In other respects the legend before us conforms to its prototypes. The magi, coming to Herod, inquire after the whereabouts of the king of the Jews, whose star they have seen in the East. Herod summons the chief priests and scribes to a council, and ascertains of them that Christ was to be born at Bethlehem. This done, he is careful to learn from the magi the exact date at which the star had appeared to

¹ Mt. xxiv. 30, 31; xxv. 31 ff.; xxvi. 64.

them. He further desires them to search diligently for the young child, that he also may worship it. They, as previously related, return home without revisiting Herod, whereupon that monarch, in anger at the deception practised upon him, causes all the children under two years of age, in and about Bethlehem, to be slaughtered. All is in vain. Joseph, warned by a dream, had taken his wife and stepson to Egypt, where they remained until after the death of Herod, when another dream commanded them to return. When afraid to enter the dominions of Archelaus, another of these useful dreams guided them to Galilee, where they took up their quarters at Nazareth.¹

How wide-spread and of what frequent recurrence is this myth of the Dangerous Child a few examples may suffice to show. In Grecian mythology the king of the gods himself had been a dangerous child. The story of Kronos swallowing his children in order to defeat the prophecy that he would be dethroned by his own son; the manner in which Rhea deceived him by giving him a stone, and Zeus, armed with thunder and lightning, deposed him from the government of the world, are familiar to all.² If we descend from gods to heroes, we find a similar legend related of Perseus, whose grandfather, Akrisios, vainly tried to avert his predicted fate, first by scheming to prevent his grandson's birth, and then by seeking to destroy him when born;³ and of Oidipous, who in spite of the attempt to cut short his life in infancy, inevitably and unconsciously fulfilled the oracle by slaying his father and marrying his mother. Within

¹ Mt. ii.² Bib., i. i. 5-7, and i. 2. 1.³ Ibid., 2. 4. 1-4.

historical times, Kyros the son of Kambyses is the hero of a similar tale. His grandfather Astyages had dreamt certain dreams which were interpreted by the magi to mean that the offspring of his daughter Mandane would expel him from his kingdom. Alarmed at the prophecy, he handed the child to his kinsman Harpagos to be killed; but this man having entrusted it to a shepherd to be exposed, the latter contrived to save it by exhibiting to the emissaries of Harpagos the body of a stillborn child of which his own wife had just been delivered. Grown to man's estate, Kyros of course justified the prediction of the magi by his successful revolt against Astyages and assumption of the monarchy.¹ Jewish tradition, like that of the Greeks and the Persians, has its dangerous child in the person of the national hero Moses, whose death Pharaoh had endeavoured to effect by a massacre of innocents, but who had lived to bring upon that ruler his inevitable fate. From these well-known examples it is interesting to turn to the chronicles of the East-Mongols, and find precisely the same tale repeated there. We read that a certain king of a people called Patsala, had a son whose peculiar appearance led the Brahmans at court to prophesy that he would bring evil upon his father, and to advise his destruction. Various modes of execution having failed, the boy was laid in a copper chest and thrown into the Ganges. Rescued by an old peasant who brought him up as his son, he in due time learnt the story of his escape, and returned to seize upon the kingdom destined for him from his birth. This was in B.C. 313.² This universal myth—of the natural origin of

¹ Herodotos, i. 107-130.

² G. O. M., pp. 21, 23.

which it would lead me too far to speak—was now adapted to the special case of Christ, who runs the usual risk and escapes it with the usual good fortune of dangerous children.

Having thus preserved the infant Christ from the dangers that threatened him, Matthew tells us absolutely nothing about him until he has arrived at manhood, and is ready to enter on his public life. Luke is much less reticent. True, he knows nothing whatever of the star that appeared in the East; nothing of Herod's inquiries as to the birthplace of Christ; nothing of the massacre of the innocents, nor of the flight into Egypt and the return from that country to Nazareth. On the contrary, his narrative by implication excludes all this, for he makes Joseph and Mary go up to Bethlehem for the census only, and return to Nazareth soon after it; so that Herod could have had no occasion to kill the infants up to the age of two years, for Christ could not have been above a few weeks old at most.¹ Moreover, we learn definitely from one verse that his parents went up *from Nazareth* to Jerusalem every year at the passover.² But the absence of any statements like those just taken from the first Gospel is amply compensated in the third by several pleasing details relating to his infancy and boyhood. In the first place we learn that after eight days he was circumcised, and named Jesus according to the angel's desire.³ Next, we are told that after his mother's purification—which would last thirty-three days after the circumcision—she and his step-father took him to the temple to be presented, and to make the customary offering. There was in the

¹ Lu. ii. 39.

² Ibid., ii. 41.

³ Ibid., ii. 21.

temple a man named Simeon who had been promised by the Holy Ghost that he should not die till he had seen Christ. This man, who came by the Spirit into the temple, took the baby in his arms and gave vent to his emotion in the beautiful little hymn known as the *Nunc Dimittis*:—"Now, O Lord, thou dost release thy servant according to thy word in peace, because mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all nations; a light for the revelation of the Gentiles and the glory of thy people Israel."¹

Less exquisite in its simplicity, but not altogether dissimilar in tone, is the prophecy of the Rishi Asita on the infant Buddha. This old and eminent ascetic had come to see the child whose marvellous gifts had been made known to him by supernatural signs. Having embraced its feet, and predicted its future pre-eminence, he had surprised the king by bursting into tears and heaving long sighs. Questioned about the meaning of this he replied: "Great king, it is not on account of this child that I weep; truly there is not in him the smallest vice. Great king, I am old and broken; and this young prince² will certainly clothe himself with the perfect and complete intelligence of Buddha, and will cause the wheel of the law that has no superior to turn. . . . After becoming Buddha he will cause hundreds of thousands of millions of beings to pass to the other border of the ocean of wandering life, and will lead them for ever to immortality. And I—I shall not see this pearl of Buddhas! Cured of illness, I shall not be freed by him from passion! Great king, that is

¹ Lk. ii. 29-32.

² Literally, Sarvarthasiddha.

why I weep, and why in my sadness I heave long sighs." ¹

So Abd-al-mottalib, Mahomet's grandfather, on seeing his grandchild immediately after his birth, is reported to have exclaimed : "Praise be to Allah, who has given me this glorious youth, who even in the cradle rules over other boys. I commend him to the protection of Allah, the Lord of the four elements, that he may show him to us when he is well grown up. To his protection I commend him from the evil of the wicked spirit." ²

Prognostications of greatness in infancy are, indeed, among the stock incidents in the mythical or semi-mythical lives of eminent persons. Not content with Simeon's recognition, Luke introduces an old prophetess called Anna, living in the temple, and represents her as giving thanks, and speaking of the child to all who looked for redemption in Jerusalem. ³

Twelve years are now suffered to elapse without further account of the young Jesus than that he grew and strengthened, filled with wisdom, and that the grace of God was upon him. ⁴ At twelve years old, the blank is filled up by a single event. His parents had gone to Jerusalem to keep the passover, taking Jesus with them. On their way back they missed him, and having failed to find him among their travelling companions, returned to look for him at Jerusalem. There they found him in the temple sitting among the doctors of the law, listening to them and putting questions. Those who heard him are said to have been astonished at his intelligence.

¹ R. T. R. P., vol. ii. pp. 106, 107.

² L. L. M., vol. i. p. 143.

³ Lu. ii. 36-38.

⁴ Ibid., ii. 40.

Questioned by his mother as to this extraordinary conduct, he replied, "How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?"¹ Were this incident confirmed by other authorities, and did it stand in some kind of connection with the events that precede and follow it, we might accept it as a genuine reminiscence of the boyhood of Jesus. That a precocious boy, eager for information, should take the opportunity of a visit to the head-quarters of Hebraic learning to seek from the authorities then most respected a solution of questions that troubled his mind, would not in itself be so very surprising. And those who are familiar with the kind of inquiries made by clever children, especially on theological topics, will not think it strange that his youthful wits should occasionally be too much for those of professed theologians. But the isolation in which this single event stands in the first thirty years of Christ's life, and the total absence of confirmation from any other source, compel us to regard it as an invention designed to show an early consciousness in Jesus of his later mission, and also to prove the inability of the doctors to cope with him. We must, therefore, reject it along with the other myths of the infancy, of which some are typical myths, others (like this) myths peculiar to Jesus, but none in the smallest degree historical.

Before entering on the later life of Jesus, let us note certain differences between Matthew and Luke in their treatment of the infancy, which will confirm the above conclusion. In the first place, it is to be observed that they effect the desired end by totally

¹ Lu. ii. 41-50.

unlike methods. Given the problem of getting the infant Christ born without the assistance of a father, there were various ways in which readers could be assured of the truth of such a miracle. One was to inform Joseph in a dream of the coming event; another was to announce it to Mary by means of an angel. In choosing between these expedients each Evangelist is guided by his own idiosyncrasy. Matthew selects the dream; Luke the angel; and it is noteworthy that on other occasions they exhibit similar preferences. Matthew gets out of every difficulty by a dream. In the course of his two first chapters he uses this favourite contrivance no less than five times; four times for Joseph, and once for the magi.¹ Twice, it is true, he mentions an angel of the Lord as appearing in the dream, but the angel in his narrative plays a very subordinate part, and is, indeed, practically superfluous. With Luke, on the contrary, the principal agent in the events of the infancy is the angel, who supplies the place of the dream in Matthew. An angel informs Zacharias that his wife is to have a son; an angel declares to Mary that she is destined to give birth to the Son of God; an angel announces that event to the shepherds after its occurrence; and angels appear in crowds above them as soon as the announcement has been made.² Another striking difference is the extreme fondness of Matthew for ancient prophecies, and of Luke for little anthems or songs of praise. The diverse natures of the two writers are well exemplified by this distinction; the former being the more penetrated with the history and literature of the Jewish race; the

¹ Mt. i. 20, and ii. 12, 13, 22.

² Lu. i. 11, 26, and ii. 9, 13.

latter the more flexible and the more imbued with the spirit of his age. Hence, Matthew almost avowedly constructs his narrative in such a manner as to ensure the fulfilment of the prophecies. After describing Mary's miraculous conception, he says that all this was done to fulfil Isaiah's words: "Behold, a virgin shall conceive" (more accurately: the maiden has conceived), "and shall bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel."¹ And this he quotes, regardless of the fact that Christ never was called Immanuel, and that if the one clause of the prophecy is to be understood literally, so must the other. Thus also he reveals his reason for assigning to Bethlehem the honour of being Christ's birthplace, when he places in the mouths of the priests at the court of Herod a verse from Micah, in which it is asserted that from Bethlehem Ephratah shall come a man who is to be ruler in Israel.² Further, he massacres the innocents in order to corroborate a saying of Jeremiah,³ and he takes Joseph and Mary to Egypt to confirm an expression of Hosea.⁴ In each case, he perverts the natural sense of the prophets; for in Jeremiah, the children are to return to their own land, which the innocents could not do; and in Hosea, the son who is called out of Egypt is the people of Israel. Lastly, in his exceeding love of quoting the Old Testament, he commits the most singular blunder of all in applying to Christ the words spoken of Samson by the angel who announced his birth. If, indeed, the allusion be to this passage (and it can scarcely be to any other), the Evangelist

¹ Mt. i. 23; Isa. vii. 14.

² Mt. ii. 6; Mic. v. 2.

³ Mt. ii. 18; Jer. xxxi. 15.

⁴ Mt. ii. 15; Hos. xi. 1.

is barely honest; for he converts the angelic words, "he shall *be a Nazarite*," into the words "he shall *be called a Nazarene*."¹ So Judaic a writer could hardly be ignorant that a Nazarite was not the same thing as an inhabitant of Nazareth. But from whatever source the quotation may come, its object plainly is to lead to the belief that notwithstanding his birth at Bethlehem, Jesus was called by his contemporaries a Nazarene.

Luke does not trouble himself with the search for ancient oracles, but indulges a far freer and more inventive genius. His personages give utterance to their feelings in highly finished songs, which are sometimes very beautiful, but most certainly could never have been uttered by the simple people to whom he attributes them. Among these are the salutation of Elizabeth to Mary, and the still more elaborate answer of Mary. Zacharias, the very instant he recovers his speech, recites a complete hymn of no inconsiderable length.³ Again, Simeon expresses his joy at the birth of the Saviour in a similar manner;⁴ but in his case it may be said that he had so long expected to see the Christ that his hymn of thanksgiving might well be ready.

Passing now to the manhood of Jesus, we find the four Evangelists all agreed in recording the baptism by John as the earliest known event in his adult career, and it is unquestionably with this consecration by a great man that his authentic life begins. Mark and John indeed were unaware of anything previous

¹ Mt. ii. 23; Judg. xiii. 5.

² Lu. i. 42-55.

³ Lu. i. 68-79.

⁴ Ibid., ii. 29-32.

to this period, and the former introduces it by the words, "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ the Son of God,"¹ showing that for him at least the history of his Master began at this point. As usual, the myth appears in its simplest form in his pages. After applying to John the Baptist a prophecy by Isaiah, he states that this prophet was engaged in baptizing in the wilderness, and that all Judæa and all the Jerusalemites went out to him and were baptized, confessing their sins. He declared that a mightier than he was coming after him, the latchet of whose shoes he was unworthy to unloose. Jesus, like the rest of the world, went to be baptized, and as he came out of the water he saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. There was a voice from the heavens, "Thou art my beloved Son, in thee I am well pleased." Matthew and Luke describe the baptism of John in a similar manner, Matthew adding a conversation between Jesus and John. They also mention the baptism of Jesus, the descent of the dove, and the voice, but with slight variations. For whereas Mark merely says that *Jesus saw* the heavens opened and the Spirit like a dove descending, and Matthew, in substantial accordance with him, relates that the heavens were opened [to him],² and that *he saw* the Spirit descend as a dove, Luke going further pretends that the heavens *were* opened and that the Spirit *did* descend in a bodily form like a dove upon him.³ Thus is the subjective fact in the consciousness of Jesus gradually changed into an objective fact, a transition deserv-

¹ Mk. i. 1.

² The *αὐτῷ* is doubtful.

³ Mk. i. 1-12; Mt. iii.; Lu. iii. 1-22.

ing to be noted as illustrative of the trivial changes of language by which a myth may grow. Several other examples of a like process will meet us in the course of this inquiry. The scene at the baptism is described differently again in the fourth Gospel. There the testimony of John the Baptist to Christ is rendered far more emphatic; he receives him with the words, "Behold the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sins of the world;" and he explains his knowledge of him by the fact that he has received a special revelation concerning him. On whomsoever he saw the Spirit descend and remain, that was he who was to baptize with the Holy Ghost. Now he had seen the Spirit descend like a dove on Jesus, and therefore had borne witness that he was the son of God.¹ Of the opening of the heavens and of the voice nothing is said, and the meaning of the whole story evidently is that this descent of the Spirit was a private sign arranged between God and John the Baptist, but of which the bystanders either perceived nothing, or understood nothing. For had they known that the Holy Ghost itself was thus bearing witness to Jesus, what need was there of the witness of John? It is evident, however, that even if they saw the dove flying down and alighting upon Jesus, they were not informed that it represented the Holy Spirit. Thus the whole fact is reduced to a peculiar interpretation given by John to a natural occurrence. We have then three versions of the baptismal myth:—in the first certain circumstances are perceived by Jesus; in the second they are perceived by John; in the third they actually occur.

¹ John i. 6–37.

Strangely inconsistent with this distinct acknowledgment of Christ as the son of God, is the inquiry addressed to him at a subsequent period by John the Baptist through his disciples. It appears that on hearing of the extraordinary fame of Jesus and of the course he was pursuing, John sent two disciples from the prison where he was confined to put this question to him, "Art thou he that should come, or do we expect another?" in other words, Are you the Messiah? Thus interrogated, Jesus replied, not by appealing to the testimony of the dove at his baptism, or the voice from heaven, but by citing the miraculous cures he was then performing. Nor did he in the least resent the doubt implied in John the Baptist's query. On the contrary, he immediately entered upon a glowing panegyric of his precursor, describing him as the messenger sent before his face to prepare his way, and as the prophet Elias who was expected to come¹ (a title which in another Gospel the Baptist had expressly repudiated²). This remarkable transaction between the two teachers could not easily have occurred, if the elder had previously discovered "him that should come" in the person of Jesus. For then we must suppose that since the baptism he had seen reason to hesitate as to the correctness of his opinion. And in that case, could he have referred the question to Jesus himself for his decision? And could Jesus have employed the terms of praise here given, in speaking of one who had lapsed from his former faith into a state of doubt? Plainly not. The Evangelists have overshot the mark in their narrative of the baptism. Eager to make John bear witness to Jesus, they have

¹ Mt. xi. 1-15; Lu. vii. 18-30.

² Jo. i. 21.

forgotten that it was only at a later period that he was convinced—if he was convinced at all—of the Messianic claims of the young man who had passed under his influence, and derived from him some of his earliest inspirations. His doubts are historical; his conviction is mythical.

Temporary retirement into solitude naturally followed upon the consecration administered by John in the baptismal rite. Jesus spent some time wandering in a lonely place, the period of forty days assigned to this purpose being naturally suggested by the forty years of Israel's troubles in the wilderness. If there mingled among his meditations any lingering feelings of reluctance to follow the course pointed out by the Baptist, he would have afterwards described such feelings as temptations of the devil. Hence, it may be, the story of his conversations with Satan. These are not alluded to at all in Mark, who simply mentions the fact that he was tempted by Satan. Neither is there any reference in Mark to fasting for the whole of the forty days or any part of them. Greatly improving upon this bald version, the other two Synoptics tell us that he ate nothing during all this time, and describe the very words of his dialogues with the tempter. Satan had besought him to make bread out of stones; to cast himself down from a high place, and to accept at his hands all the kingdoms of earth in return for a single act of worship.¹ Jesus, like the Buddha at the corresponding period of his life, emerged triumphant from the trial. It was by no means equal in severity to that which Sakyamuni underwent. He also was obliged to overcome the

¹ Mk. i. 12, 13; Mt. iv. 1-11; Lu. iv. 1-13.

devil before he could attain perfection. "Mârâ the sinner," the Indian Satan, assailed him not only by force of arms, despatching an immense army against him; but finding this onslaught a failure, he tried the subtler mode of attempting to corrupt his virtue by the seductions of women. His beautiful daughters were despatched with orders to display all their charms, and employ all their fascinations before the young monk. They faithfully executed the commission, but all was in vain. Calm and unmoved, the Boddhisattva regarded them with complete indifference, and emerged from this severest of trials a perfect Buddha.¹ In like manner Zarathustra was tempted by the Parsee devil, Angra-mainyus, who held out a promise of happiness if he would but curse the good law. Like Jesus, Zarathustra repelled the suggestion with indignation: "I will not curse the good Mazdayasna law, not even if limbs, soul, and life were to part from one another."²

Not long after his return from the desert, Jesus took up his abode at the village of Kapharnaoum, or Capernaum, in Galilee, Nazareth being in several ways uncongenial to him.³ In the first place it was the abode of his family, who did not believe in the pretensions he now began to advance. Moreover, he was well known to the Nazarenes as the carpenter, or the carpenter's son, and it seemed an unwarrantable presumption in their young townsman, undistinguished by advantages either of birth or education, to claim to become their teacher.⁴ His relations also not only discredited him by their unbelief, but occasionally

¹ R. T. R. P., vol. ii. p. 286-327.

³ Mk. ii. 1; Mt. iv. 12-16.

² Av., vol. i. p. 244.—Fargard xix. 23-26.

⁴ Mk. vi. 3.

took active measures to stop his proceedings.¹ From these and perhaps other causes, he entirely failed to accomplish any important miracle at Nazareth, and he had to excuse his failure by the remark that a prophet is not without honour except in his own country, among his own relations, and in his own house.² The more natural version—that of Mark—adds that he marvelled because of their unbelief. With less simplicity Matthew relates, not that he was unable to do, but that he did not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief.³ Further confirmation of the incredulity of the Nazarenes is afforded by their reception of a remarkable sermon said to have been delivered by Jesus in their synagogue. It seems that after he had preached in various parts of Galilee, and had been well received, he came to Nazareth and, having read a Messianic prophecy from Isaiah, proceeded to apply it to himself. Having noticed the demand which he expected would be addressed to him, that he should repeat there such works as he was reported to have performed at Capernaum, he proceeded to convey by some pointed illustrations from the Old Testament the unflattering intimation that Nazareth was to be less favoured by God than his adopted home. Hereupon a storm arose in the synagogue, and an effort was made by the enraged audience to cast him from the brow of a hill. But he escaped in safety to his own residence at Capernaum.⁴

Whether or not any such sermon was preached or any such attempt upon his life was made, the narrative bears further witness to the fact of ill

¹ Mk. iii. 21, 31.

³ Mt. xiii. 54-58.

² Ibid., vi. 4.

⁴ Lu. iv. 14-30.

success in the town where he had been brought up, and to his possession of a house or lodging at Capernaum. Whether he himself was the owner of the abode, or whether it belonged to a disciple who received him (of which latter there is no evidence), makes little difference; the representation afterwards made that foxes had holes, and birds had nests, but the son of man had not where to lay his head,¹ is equally negatived by either supposition. Mark and John know nothing of this condition of the son of man. In John's Gospel, indeed, it is distinctly contradicted by the statement that two of the Baptist's disciples asked him to show them where he lived; that he did so, and that they stayed with him that day.² Indirect evidence of the same kind is afforded by the notice of an entertainment given by Jesus at his own house, to which he invited a very promiscuous company. Luke, indeed, represents this feast as having been given by Levi, but this is evidently for the sake of an artistic connection with the summons to Levi, which in all three narratives immediately precedes it. For the same reason he departs from both other Evangelists in making the scribes at this very feast put the question why Jesus and his disciples did not fast, which, according to the more trustworthy version, is put by the disciples of the Baptist.⁴ Thus Luke contrives to convert three unconnected stories into a single connected one.

¹ Mt. viii. 19, 20; Lu. ix. 57, 58.

² Jo. i. 39.

³ Mk. ii. 15-17; Mt. ix. 10-13; Lu. v. 29-32.

⁴ Mk. ii. 18-22; Mt. ix. 14-17; Lu. v. 33-39.

That Jesus received the more degraded classes of his countrymen on equal terms, and that his habits were not ascetic, are the important facts which we have to gather from these several statements.

The inference from the evidence on the whole is that Jesus was in comfortable, though not opulent circumstances ; and even had he been in want, he had friends enough whose devotion would never have allowed him to remain without a good lodging and sufficient food.

These friends he seems to have begun collecting round him as soon as he entered upon his career of preaching in Galilee. Among the earliest were four fishermen, Simon and his brother Andrew, James and his brother John. The first pair of brothers Jesus called away from their occupation, saying, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men."¹ So say two Gospels, but a very different account appears in John. There we are told that two of the disciples of John the Baptist having heard Jesus, left their master to follow him. One of these two was Andrew, Simon's brother, and it was Andrew who went and informed Simon that he had discovered the Messiah. On seeing Simon, Jesus addresses him, "Thou art Simon the son of John ; thou shalt be called Kephas."² Not a word is said here of the calling of fishermen pursued by these brothers, nor of the remarkable promise to make them fishers of men. Moreover it is they who present themselves to Jesus ; not he who summons them. The two accounts are mutually exclusive.

Luke has a third version, not absolutely irreconcilable

¹ Mk. i. 16-20 ; Mt. iv. 18-22.

² Jo. i. 38-43.

with that of Mark and Matthew, though inconsistent in all its details. According to him, Jesus had once been speaking to the people from Simon's boat, which was lying on the lake of Gennesaret. The address concluded, he desired Simon to launch into the lake and let down the nets. Simon replied that they had toiled all night and caught nothing; yet he would obey. On casting out the net it was found to enclose so great a multitude of fishes that it broke. Simon called to his partners, James and John, to come to his assistance, and both vessels were not only filled with fish, but began to sink with the weight. Peter, ascribing this large haul to the presence of Jesus, begged him to depart from him, for he was a sinful man. Jesus told him, as in the other Gospels he tells him and his brother Andrew (who does not appear here), that he shall henceforth catch men. Hereupon all the three forsook all, and followed him; from which it must clearly be understood that they had not followed him before. Thus, that which the simpler version represents as a mere summons, obeyed at once, is here converted into a summons enforced upon the fishermen by a professional success so great as to appear to them miraculous, and to lead in their minds to the inference that since Jesus had commanded them to let down the nets, and their obedience had been thus rewarded, he was in some obscure manner the cause of the good fortune which had attended their efforts.¹

Leaving aside for the present all that is peculiar to John, who alone mentions the calling of Philip, there is but one other disciple concerning whom we have

¹ Lu. v. 1-11.

any information as to the mode in which he was led to join Jesus. This is Levi, or Matthew, the publican. Jesus found him sitting at the receipt of custom, and commanded him to follow him, which he instantly did.¹ But we are not compelled to suppose that from this time forward Levi did nothing but accompany Jesus or go through the country preaching the new faith. He may have done so, or he may only have left his business from time to time to listen to the prophet who had so deeply impressed him. For while three Evangelists mention this circumstance, only one of them, and that the least trustworthy, adds that in following Jesus he left all things.

The names of the other seven disciples are given with but a single variation in all of the synoptical Gospels.² To these twelve their master gave power to heal diseases and to cast out devils, and sent them forth into the world to preach the coming of the kingdom of heaven, giving them instructions as to the manner in which they should fulfil their mission.³ When not thus engaged, they were to remain about his person, and form an inner circle of intimate friends, to receive his more hidden thoughts, and help him in the work he had undertaken.

The four who were the first to join him seem to have stood towards him in a closer relationship than any one else, and to have been in fact his only thorough disciples during the earliest period of his life. For we read that after the cure of a demoniac effected in

¹ Mk. ii. 14; Mt. ix. 9; Lu. v. 27, 28 (where alone *καταλιπὼν πάντα* is added).

² Mk. iii. 14-19; Mt. x. 1-4; Lu. vi. 12-16.

³ Mk. iii. 14, 15; Mt. x. 5-15; Lu. ix. 1-6.

the synagogue at Capernaum¹ he retired into the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John, and there healed Simon's mother-in-law of a fever by the touch of his hands, a species of remedy which requires no miracle to render it effectual.² His reputation as a thaumaturgist had now begun to spread, and crowds of people besieged his door, whom he relieved of various diseases, and from whom he expelled many devils.³ The anxiety of the devils to bear witness to his Messiahship he repressed, on this as on other occasions. Mentioning these circumstances, Matthew, ever prone to strengthen his case by the authority of a Hebrew prophet, cites Isaiah, "He himself took our infirmities, and bore our sicknesses." Certainly not a very happy application of prophecy; since it nowhere appears that Jesus bore the diseases he cured, or was possessed by the devils he expelled.

Anxious to escape from the pressure of the people, who clamoured for miracles, he retired to a desert place to pray. But here Simon and others followed him and told him that all men were seeking him. He replied that he must carry his message to other villages also, and proceeded on a tour through Galilee, preaching and casting out devils.⁴ It was on some occasion during this Galilean journey, when crowds, eager to hear his doctrine and see his wonders, had pressed around him from every quarter, that he delivered the celebrated sermon the scene of which is laid by Matthew on a mountain, and by

¹ Mk. i. 21-28; Lu. iv. 31-37.

² Mk. i. 29-31; Mt. viii. 14, 15; Lu. iv. 38, 39.

³ Mk. i. 32-34; Mt. viii. 16, 17; Lu. iv. 40, 41.

⁴ Mk. i. 35-39; Lu. iv. 42-44.

Luke in a plain.¹ A part only of this discourse has been preserved to us, for Matthew has evidently collected into one a great number of his best sayings, which were no doubt actually uttered on many different occasions and in many different places. Luke, with more sense of fitness, has scattered them about his Gospel, assigning to some an earlier, to others a later date. Notably is this unlike arrangement remarkable in the case of the Lord's prayer, and in nothing is the untrustworthiness of these Gospels, as to all exterior circumstances, more conspicuous than in their assigning to the communication of this most important prayer totally different times, different antecedents, and different surroundings. For whereas Matthew brings it within his all-comprehensive sermon on the mount, Luke causes it to be taught in "a certain place" where Jesus was praying. The former makes Jesus deliver it spontaneously; the latter in answer to the request of a disciple; the former to a vast audience; the latter to the disciples alone.²

Discrepancies like these evince the hopelessness of attempting to follow with accuracy the footsteps of Christ. We can obtain nothing beyond the most general conception of his movements, if even that; and of the order of the several events in his life we can have scarcely any notion. Discourses, parables, conversations, miracles, follow one another now in rapid succession. Leaving the consideration of the doctrines taught for another place, we will notice here, without aiming at a chronological arrangement, the

¹ Mt. chs. v.-vii. inclusive; Lu. vi. 20-49.

² Mt. vi. 9-13; Lu. xi. 1-4.

principal scenes of his life : and, beginning with his miracles, we will take before any others those in which devils are expelled ; or as we should say, maniacs are restored to sanity.

A strange miracle of this kind is related of a man in the country of the Gadarenes or Gergasenes. Matthew indeed, according to a common habit of his, has made him into two men, but the other two Evangelists agree that there was but one. This man was a raving lunatic, who had defeated every effort to confine him hitherto made, and who lived among tombs, crying and cutting himself with stones. Seeing Jesus, he addressed him as the Son of the Most High God, and adjured him not to torment him. On being asked his name, he said it was Legion, for they were many. Having been ordered out by Jesus, he begged for leave to enter into a herd of swine which was feeding near at hand ; this was granted, and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the sea and were all drowned, their number being about 2000.¹ After this wanton destruction of property, it is not surprising that the people “began to pray him to depart out of their coasts.” Jesus on this occasion certainly displayed a singular tenderness towards the devils, and very little consideration for the unfortunate owners of the pigs. Nor did the Legion gain much by the bargain ; for they lost their new habitation the moment they had taken possession of it.

The disciples, as we have seen, had received power over devils, but it appears from a remarkable story that they were not always able to master them. For on returning to them after the transfiguration, Jesus

¹ Mk. v. 1-20 ; Mt. viii. 28-34 ; Lu. viii. 26-39.

found a crowd about them engaged in some disputation. Having demanded an explanation, a man told him that he had brought his son, who was subject to violent fits, probably epileptic (Mark alone makes him deaf and dumb), and begged the disciples to cure him, which they had been unable to do. Hereupon Jesus, bursting into an angry exclamation against the "faithless and perverse generation" with whom he lived, took the boy and healed him. Luke omits the private conversation with the disciples which followed on this scene. They asked him, it is said, why they had been thus unsuccessful. The answer is different in Matthew and in Mark. In the former Gospel, he assigns a plain reason: "because of your unbelief;" adding afterwards, "this kind does not come out except by fasting and prayer." In Mark, the latter statement constitutes the whole reply, no allusion being made to the disciples' unbelief. It is noticeable, however, that in Mark alone the father is required to believe before the boy is healed; a singular condition to exact, since belief may generally be expected to follow on a miracle rather than to precede it.¹

In the case of the Syro-phœnician woman, however, there was no need to impose it, for her faith, founded on the reputation of Jesus, was perfect. This woman came to him when he had gone upon an excursion to the neighbourhood of Tyre and Sidon, and begged him to cast out a devil from her daughter, who was not present. He at first refused on the ground of her being a Gentile, but after a remarkable dialogue, confessed himself convinced by her arguments, and told her that on her return she would find the

¹ Mk. ix. 14-29; Mt. xvii. 14-21; Lu. ix. 37-43.

daughter cured, which actually happened.¹ Here we have an instance of a remedy effected at a distance, which can scarcely be credited at all unless on the supposition that the daughter knew of her mother's expedition, and had equal faith in Jesus. The probability is, however, that her recovery is an invention, though the argument with the woman may possibly be historical.

Belief in the production of diseases by demoniacal possession, and in the power of exorcism over diseases so produced, is the common condition of mind in barbarous or semi-civilised nations. The phenomena which occurred in the first century in Judæa are reproduced at the present day in more than one quarter of the globe. Take, to begin with, the theory of possession in Abyssinia, which I find quoted by Canon Callaway from Stern's "Wanderings among the Falashes." Canon Callaway observes that "in Abyssinia we meet with the word *Bouda*, applied to a character more resembling the Abatakadi or wizards of these parts [South Africa]. . . . The *Bouda*, or an evil spirit called by the same name and acting with him, takes possession of others, giving rise to an attack known as 'Bouda symptoms,' which present the characteristics of intense hysteria, bordering on insanity. Together with the *Boudas* there is, of course, the exorcist, who has unusual powers, and, like the *inyanga yokubula*, or diviner among the Amazulu, points out those who are *Boudas*, that is, Abatakati."² Describing the diseases of the Polynesian islanders, the missionary Turner says: "Insanity is occasionally met with.

¹ Mk. vii. 24-30; Mt. xv. 21-28.

² R. S. A., part iii. pp. 280, 281

It was invariably traced in former times to the immediate presence of an evil spirit."¹ Rising somewhat higher in the scale of culture, the Singhalese, as depicted by Knox, present the spectacle of patients whose symptoms are an almost exact reproduction of those which afflicted the objects of the mercy of Jesus. "I have many times," he relates, "seen men and women of this country strangely possessed, insomuch that I could judge it nothing else but the effect of the devil's power upon them, and they themselves do acknowledge as much. In the like condition to which I never saw any that did profess to be a worshipper of the holy name of Jesus. They that are thus possessed, some of them will run mad into the woods, screeching and roaring, but do mischief to none; some will be taken so as to be speechless, shaking, and quaking, and dancing, and will tread upon the fire and not be hurt; they will also talk idle, like distracted folk." The author proceeds to say that the friends of these demoniac patients appeal to the devil for their cure, believing their attacks to proceed from him.²

The striking successes of Jesus with maladies of this order naturally brought him the reputation of ability to deal no less powerfully with other diseases. Accordingly, a leper presented himself one day, and kneeling to him said that if he wished he could make him clean. He did so, and the leper, though enjoined to keep silence, went about proclaiming the power of Jesus, who was consequently besieged by still further throngs of applicants and of curious spectators.³

¹ N. Y., p. 221.

² H. R. C., p. 77.

³ Mk. i. 40-45; Mt. viii. 1-4; Lu. v. 12-16.

Illustrating the manner in which he was pursued, we find a curious story. Jesus was in his own house at Capernaum, when a paralytic, borne upon a couch, was brought to him to be healed. Unable from the concourse about him to penetrate to Jesus, his bearers let him down through an opening in the roof. After forgiving the man's sins, which he claimed a right to do, he told him to take up his bed and walk. This the paralytic at once did, to the amazement of the bystanders.¹ Matthew, telling the same story, omits the crowd and the circumstance of letting down the patient through the roof; and these adjuncts may be fictitious in the special case, but in so far as they bear witness to the thaumaturgic repute of Jesus, have in them an element of genuine history.

Of various other miracles of healing with which Jesus is credited, one of the most interesting is the alleged resuscitation of Jairus' daughter. Jairus was a ruler of the synagogue; a personage therefore of some note in his district; and his daughter, a little girl of twelve years old, was dangerously ill, and supposed by her friends to be at the point of death. At this critical moment Jairus repaired to Jesus, and requested him to come and lay his hands on the little maid, that she might live. Jesus consented, but before he could reach the house messengers arrived who informed Jairus that his child was already dead; he need not trouble the master. None the less did Jesus proceed to the house, taking with him only the most intimate disciples, Peter, James, and John. Here a strange scene awaited him. About, and probably in the sick-room had gathered

¹ Mk. ii. 1-12; Mt. ix. 1-8; Lu. v. 18-26

a crowd of people, relations, friends, and dependants of Jairus, who were engaged in raising a wild clamour of grief around the child. Fluteplayers were performing on their instruments, while their lugubrious music was accompanied by the tumultuous wailing and howling of the mourners. Jesus, having entered the place, declared that the maiden was not dead, but sleeping; or as we should say, in a state of insensibility. The people laughed in derision at the assertion, but Jesus at once took the very proper and sensible measure of turning them all out of the room (which was either the sick-room itself or one close to it), and taking the damsel's hand, commanded her to rise. She did so, and Jesus (again exhibiting excellent sense) ordered that she should have something to eat.¹ In this case we have a peculiarly valuable instance of the manner in which miracles may be manufactured. Analysed into its elements of fact and its elements of inference, we find in it nothing which cannot be easily understood without supposing either any exercise of supernatural power or any deliberate fraud in the narrators. Observe first, that in two out of the three versions the girl is reported by Jairus not to be dead, but dying. True, before Jesus can get to her it is announced that she is actually dead. But Jesus, having reached the house, and having evidently seen the patient (though this fact is only suffered to appear in Luke's version), expressly contradicts this opinion, declaring that she is not dead, but unconscious. On what particular symptom he

¹ Mk. v. 21-24, and 35-43; Mt. ix. 18, 19, and 23-26; Lu. viii. 40-42. and 49-56.

founded this statement we do not know, but we cannot, without accusing Jesus of deliberate untruthfulness, believe that he made it without reason. At any rate, the measures taken by him implied a decided conviction of the accuracy of his observation. If she were, as he asserted, not dead, though dangerously ill, the hubbub in the house, if suffered to continue, would very likely have rendered her recovery impossible. Quiet was essential; and that having been obtained, it was perfectly possible that under the soothing touch and the care of Jesus she might awake from her trance far better than before, and to all appearance suddenly restored to health. The crisis of her case was over, and it may have been by preventing her foolish friends from treating that crisis as death, that Jesus in reality saved her life. And when she awoke, the order to give her food implied a state of debility in which she could be assisted, not by supernatural, but by very commonplace measures. Observe, however, the manner in which in this case the myth has grown. In two of the Gospels, Mark and Luke, Jairus comes to Jesus, not when his daughter is dead, but only when she is supposed to be at the last gasp. There is no reason from their accounts to believe that she died at all, her friends' opinion on that point being contradicted by Jesus. But in Matthew the miracle is enhanced by the statement of the father to Jesus that she was just dead.¹ Consistently with this account the message afterwards sent to him from his house is omitted. Again, while it seems from the manner in which Matthew and Mark relate what

¹ Ἀπὸ ἐτελεύτησεν is the expression (Mt. ix. 18).

happened, that the words of Jesus, "The maiden is not dead, but sleepeth," preceded his entry into her room, it is clear from Luke that they succeeded it. And this is consistent with the requirements of the case. Some of the mourners and attendants must obviously have been by the bedside, and he could not turn them out till he was himself beside it. Then, clearing the sick-chamber of useless idlers, he could proceed in peace to treat the patient; while if we suppose that these people were all outside the door, there is far less reason for their prompt expulsion. That this is the true explanation of the miracle I do not venture to assert; I have only been anxious to show, by a single instance, how easily the tale of an astounding prodigy might arise out of a few perfectly simple circumstances.

A curious incident took place on the way to the house of Jairus. A woman who had had an issue of blood for twelve years, came behind Jesus and touched his clothes, whereupon she was instantly healed. Jesus, turning round, told her that her faith had saved her.¹ Such is the fact as related by the first Evangelist; but the other two, magnifying the marvel, place Jesus in the midst of a throng of people pressing upon him, and make him supernaturally conscious that some one has touched him in such a manner as to extract remedial power out of him. Discovered by this instinct, the woman tremblingly confesses her deed.

Neither contact, however, nor even the presence of Jesus on the spot, were essential to a miracle of healing. A centurion, having a paralytic servant, either went or sent others to Jesus, requesting that he would heal him.

¹ Mk. v. 25-34; Mt. ix. 20-22; Lu. viii. 43-48.

Before Jesus could reach the house, he declared that he was unworthy of receiving him within it, but entreated that the word might be spoken, adding that his servant would then be healed. This was done; and Jesus took occasion to point the moral by contrasting the faith of this heathen with that of the Jews, dwelling on the superior strength of the former.¹ This myth, which appears only in two Gospels, and in them with considerable variations, seems to have been designed to glorify Jesus by making a Roman officer acknowledge his powers. This intention is more evident in Luke than in Matthew, for in Matthew the centurion comes himself; but in Luke he sends "the elders of the Jews" to prefer his request, their appearance evincing his importance, and therefore increasing the honour done to Jesus by the suppliant attitude in which he stands. When Jesus is near his house the officer still does not approach in person, but sends friends, distinctly stating that he thought himself unworthy to come himself, and intimating his belief that a mere word will be enough to heal his servant. It is impossible to see why this message might not have been sent in the first instance by the elders, and the cure effected at once, but the two embassies to Jesus make a better story. Thus, in this version the centurion, who in the other version gives an interesting account of his official status, and receives the highest praise for his faith, never actually sees Jesus at all; and the eulogy is spoken not *to* him, but *of* him. Here, then, is another example of the way in which tales of this kind grow in passing from mouth to mouth.

¹ Mt. viii. 5-13; Lu. vii. 1-10.

Sometimes much more materialistic means of healing were adopted. One day, by the sea of Galilee, a deaf and dumb man was brought to Jesus. In this case he took the man aside, put his fingers into his ears, spat, touched his tongue, looked up to heaven, sighed, and said, Ephphatha, or, Be opened.¹ When a word was sufficient, it was singular to go through all these performances, and the whole proceeding has somewhat the air of a piece of jugglery. At Bethsaida he dealt in like manner with a blind man, leading him out of the town, spitting upon his eyes, and then putting his hands upon him. Asked whether he saw, the man replied that he saw men as trees walking, whereupon a further application of the hand to his eyes caused him to see clearly.² Here the remark presents itself that if anything of the sort ever occurred, the man could not have been born blind, since he would then have been unable to distinguish either men or trees by sight. It must have been a blindness due to accident or disease of the eyes, and might not have been total. But the whole story is probably mythical.

Two more miracles of healing rest on the authority of the third Gospel alone. By one of them ten lepers, who had asked for mercy, were suddenly cleansed after they had gone away. One only of the ten, a Samaritan, turned round to glorify God and to utter his gratitude. Jesus then observes: "Were not the ten cleansed? Where are the nine? Were there none found that returned to give glory to God, except this stranger?" And he said to him, 'Arise, go; thy faith hath saved thee.'"³ Here the inten-

¹ Mk. vii. 31-37.² Mk. viii. 22-26.³ Lu. xvii. 11-19.

tion of exalting the Samaritan above the Jews is very evident.

Another prodigy was worked at the town of Nain, where the only son of a widow was just dead, and his body was being carried out to the burial-place. Jesus touched the bier, and the widow's son rose to life, to the terror of the spectators, who declared that a great prophet had been raised up, and that God had looked upon his people.¹

Though the miracles of Jesus were principally of a remedial character, there were others which were rather designed to evince his power. Conspicuous among this class is that of feeding a multitude of 5000 people who had followed him into a desert place, and whose hunger he satisfied by the supernatural multiplication of five loaves and two fishes.² Of this wonder a double version, slightly different in details, has been embodied in the two first Gospels. It is plainly the same story coming from different sources. John, whose miracles are seldom identical with those of the synoptics, relates this one nearly in the same way; except that according to him it was a lad and not (as in the other Gospels) the disciples, who had the food on which the marvel was operated. The number of persons is stated in all four Gospels to be 5000 (and on the second occasion in the two first Gospels 4000); but Matthew alone has striven to enhance the miracle still further by adding to these numbers the words, "besides women and children."

Immediately after this miracle the disciples entered

¹ Lu. vii. 11-17.

² Mk. vi. 30-45, and viii. 1-9; Mt. xiv. 14-21, and xv. 29-38; Lu. ix. 10-17; Jo. vi. 1-15.

a boat to cross the lake of Galilee, leaving their master on land. A storm overtook them at night, and as they were labouring through it, they saw Jesus walking towards them on the water. Alarmed at such an apparition they cried out in fear; but Jesus reassured them, and was received into their boat, whereupon the wind fell.¹ To this Matthew, unlike Mark and John, adds that Peter also attempted the feat of walking on the lake; but being timid, began to sink, and had to be rescued by Jesus. John alone adds to the first miracle a further one; namely, that immediately upon his entrance into the ship, they were at the land whither they went.

A somewhat similar performance is that of stilling a violent storm on the lake of Galilee, which seems to have astonished even the disciples in the boat, accustomed as they must have been to prodigies. At least their exclamation, "What sort of man then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?" looks as if all his influence over devils and diseases had failed to convince them of his true character.²

All doubt upon this score must have been removed in the minds of three at least of the disciples by a scene which occurred in their presence. Peter, James and John accompanied him one day to a high mountain, where he was transfigured before them; his raiment becoming white and shining. Elijah and Moses were seen with him, and Peter, evidently bewildered, proposed to make three tabernacles. A voice came from heaven: "This is my beloved son: hear him." Suddenly the apparition vanished;

¹ Mk. vi. 45-52; Mt. xiv. 22-33; Jo. vi. 16-21.

² Mk. iv. 35-41; Mt. viii. 23-27; Lu. viii. 22-25.

Jesus alone remained with the disciples, and on the way down charged them to tell no one of what they had seen till after the resurrection.¹ This is a suspicious circumstance, which means, if it mean anything, that the transfiguration was never thought of till after the death of Jesus, and that this order of his was invented to account for the otherwise unaccountable silence of the three disciples. For is it to be imagined that Peter, James, and John could keep the secret of this marvellous event, which was so well fitted to confirm the faith of believers, and to convince the Jews in general of the Messianic nature of the prophet? And if they did keep the secret, what weight is to be attached to their evidence, given long after the event, and when exalted views of the divinity of the Christ who had risen from death were already current?

Such are some of the "mighty works" for which Jesus claimed, and his disciples yielded, the title of "son of man," or "son of God," and assumed the authority of the "Messiah" whom the Jewish nation expected. But this claim was recognised neither by the spiritual heads of the Jews, nor by the great bulk of the people. Indeed he had given great offence to their religious sentiment both by putting forward such pretensions, and by the opinions he had expressed on various topics. The language which had caused their hostility, as belonging to his historical and not to his mythical personality, will be considered elsewhere. But the accounts—semi-mythical, semi-historical—which have reached us of the closing scenes of his life, must be passed under review now.

¹ Mk. ix. 2-13; Mt. xvii. 1-13; Lu. ix. 28-36.

Long before his actual arrest, the Gospels tell us that he had predicted to his disciples the sufferings that were to befall him. Peter, according to one of the versions, had remonstrated with him on these forebodings, and had received from him in consequence one of the sharpest reprimands he had ever given, with the opprobrious epithet of "Satan." It is further stated that he prophesied his resurrection, and his return to earth in glory with the angels of his Father. To this was added another prediction which proved false, that there were some standing there who should not taste of death till the son of man came in his kingdom. Gloomy expressions as to the necessity of his followers taking up their crosses and being ready to lose their lives also escaped him.¹ A little later, he is said to have distinctly given vent to similar expectations as to his approaching end, though without being able to make himself understood by his disciples.² Again, on the way to Jerusalem where he intended to celebrate the passover, he took all his twelve disciples aside, and distinctly foretold his execution there, and his resurrection on the third day.³

Those portions of his prophecies which related to his death at the hands of the Jewish rulers, though not those which related to his return in glory, were destined to be soon fulfilled. Determined to insist publicly upon his title to the Messianic throne, Jesus resolved upon a triumphal entry into Jerusalem. Having sent two disciples from the Mount of Olives

¹ Mk. viii. 31-ix. 1 ; Mt. xvi. 21-28 ; Lu. ix. 22-27.

² Mk. ix. 30-32 ; Mt. xvii. 22, 23 ; Lu. ix. 44, 45.

³ Mk. x. 32-34 ; Mt. xx. 17-19 ; Lu. xviii. 31-34.

to fetch a colt, hitherto unriden, which he informed them the owners would surrender on hearing that the Lord had need of it, he mounted this animal and rode into the city amid the shouts and acclamations of his supporters. Many are said to have spread their garments in his path ; others to have cut down branches from trees, and strewed them before him. Those that went before and behind him kept cheering as he rode, exclaiming : “ Hosanna, blessed is he who cometh in the name of the Lord ; blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David ; hosanna in the highest.”¹

This remarkable scene is described in all the Gospels ; but while the three first represent Jesus as sending to fetch the colt, or the ass and colt, which he in some mysterious manner knows that the man will give up, the fourth makes him take the ass and mount it ; not as in the other versions before the triumphal reception, but after it had begun. So that as to these important circumstances the two accounts are entirely at issue ; that of John being the more natural. That Jesus actually entered Jerusalem in this fashion is highly probable, for we find in the Gospels themselves a motive assigned which might well have led him to select it for his approach to the capital. There was a prophecy in Zechariah with which he was no doubt familiar : “ Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion ; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem : behold, thy King cometh unto thee, just and victorious is he ; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a foal, the young of asses.”² With the views he held as to

¹ Mk. xi. 1-11; Mt. xxi. 1-11; Lu. xix. 29-39; Jo. xii. 12-16.

² Zech. ix. 9.

his Messiahship, Jesus may well have been anxious to show that this prophecy was fulfilled in his person.

On the day after his entry on the ass, on coming from Bethany, he was hungry, and finding a fig-tree without fruit, he cursed it. Mark says that the disciples found it withered the next day ; Matthew, increasing the marvellous element, that they saw it wither "immediately." Mark also adds that it was not the season for figs, which, if correct, would have made it absurdly irrational in Jesus to expect them.¹ If we accept the more natural supposition that it was the season, but that this individual tree was barren, then we may easily understand that the absence of fruit and the withered condition of the tree were both parts of the same set of phenomena, and that the disciples may have observed them about the same time.

Human beings were the next victims of the wrath of Jesus. The money-changers and dove-sellers were turned out of the temple by him ; the fourth Gospel alone mentioning a scourge of small cords as the weapon employed.² A question put by the authorities as to his right to act thus was met by a counter-question, and finally left unanswered.³ The chief priests now consulted together as to the measures to be taken with a view of bringing him to trial, but hesitated to do anything on the feast-day for fear of

¹ Mk. xi. 12-14, and 20-26 ; Mt. xxi. 18-22.

² Mk. xi. 15-18 ; Mt. xxi. 12, 13 ; Lu. xix. 45, 46 ; Jo. ii. 14-17.

³ Mk. xi. 27-33 ; Mt. xxi. 23-27 ; Lu. xx. 1-8.

popular disturbances. Matthew tells us, what the other two do not know, that they assembled at the palace of the high priest Caiaphas, and also puts in the mouth of Jesus a distinct prophecy that after two days he will be betrayed to be crucified.¹

A similar foreboding is expressed, according to Matthew, Mark, and John, in reference to an incident which is variously described by these three Evangelists. Matthew and Mark agree in saying, that on this occasion he was taking a repast at the house of Simon the leper, when a woman came up to him with a box of very precious ointment and poured it on his head. Here, according to Mark, "some," according to Matthew, "the disciples," were indignant at the waste of the ointment, which might, they said, have been sold "for much," or "for 300 pence," and the proceeds given to the poor. But Jesus warmly took up the woman's cause, for, he remarked, "she has wrought a good work on me. For you always have the poor with you, but me ye have not always. For in pouring this ointment on my body she has done it for my burial." Mark now how strangely this simple story has been perverted in the fourth Gospel to suit the purposes of the writer. The date he assigns to it—six days before the passover—is nearly the same as that given in the second Gospel, where it is placed two days before that festival. The place, Bethany, is also identical. But the other circumstances are widely

¹ Mk. xiv. 1, 2 ; Mt. xxvi. 1-5 ; Lu. xxii. 1, 2.

different. In this Gospel alone is anything known of an intimate friend of Jesus, Lazarus by name. In it alone is there any mention of one of his most astounding miracles, the restoration of Lazarus to life. Consistently with his peculiar notion of the relations of Jesus with this man's family he says nothing of Simon the leper, but without telling us in whose house Jesus was, mentions that Lazarus was among the guests, and that his sister Martha was serving. Further, he asserts that the woman who brought the ointment was Mary, the other sister. Instead of pouring it on his head, she is made to anoint his feet, and wipe them with her hair. Instead of the disciples, or some unknown people, being angry at the waste, it is Judas Iscariot in whose mouth the obnoxious comment is placed. The sum he names, 300 pence, is the same as that assigned in Mark as the value of the ointment. But in order to cover Judas with still further obloquy, the Evangelist charges him with a desire to obtain this sum, not for the poor, but for himself; he being the bearer of the common purse, and being in the habit of dishonestly appropriating some portion of its contents.¹ Of such an accusation not a trace is to be found in the other Gospels, whose writers were assuredly not likely to spare the reputation of Judas if it were open to attack. Nor does the author of this insinuation offer one particle of evidence in its support.

The steps by which a story grows from an indefinite to a definite, from a historical to a mythical form, are

¹ Mk. xiv. 3-9; Mt. xxvi. 6-13; Jo. xii. 3-8.

admirably illustrated in this instance. A tradition is preserved in which, while the main event is clear, many of the surrounding circumstances have been suffered to escape from memory. Writer after writer takes it up, and finding it thus imperfect, adds to it detail after detail until its whole complexion is altered. Even the main event may not always be exempted from the transfiguring process; as here, where the feet of Jesus are substituted for the head, and the interesting picture introduced of Mary wiping them with her hair, and consequently placing herself in a situation of the deepest humility. And if the central incident is thus unsafe, still more so are its adjuncts. First, the woman is unknown, as are those who murmur against her. Then, in the second stage, the woman is still unknown, but the murmurers are known generally as the disciples. But no bad motive is as yet assigned for their censure. Lastly, in the third stage, the woman is known, the murmurer is known specifically as *one* disciple, and a bad motive is assigned for his censure. Such is the way in which myths grow up.

The circumstance we have next to deal with is obscure, not because too much has been added, but because something has been omitted. Jesus had now drawn upon him the mortal hatred of the priests of the temple. He was well aware of his danger, as many of his expressions show. He endeavoured to avoid it by living in concealment in or near Jerusalem. Not that we are told of this in so many words, but that the course of the story renders it a necessary assumption. For all the Gospels inform us that one of his disciples, Judas named Iscariot, went to the

chief priests and betrayed him, receiving a pecuniary reward for the service thus rendered.¹ As to this fact there is complete unanimity, and it is borne out by the manner of his arrest as subsequently depicted. We cannot then treat it as a fiction; but it is plain that had Jesus been leading the open and public life described in the Gospels, there would have been no secret to betray, and no reward to be earned. A period, more or less long, of retirement to some spot known only to friends, must therefore be taken for granted. John alludes to something of the sort, though not distinctly, when he relates that there was a garden across the brook Cedron, to which he often resorted with his disciples, and which was known to Judas. But the Christian tradition did not like to acknowledge that Christ, whom it represents as braving death, ever lurked in hidden places like a criminal, and at the same time it wished to brand the memory of Judas with infamy. Hence the suppression of a fact without which the story cannot be understood. The expressions, "he sought how he might conveniently betray him;"² or "he sought opportunity to betray him,"³ plainly point to the same inference.

There are some differences in the manner in which the proceedings of Judas are related. All the Gospels agree that he received money, but Matthew alone knows how much. This Evangelist had in his mind a passage in Zechariah, which he erroneously attributes to Jeremiah, and which moreover he misquotes.⁴ In the original it runs thus: "And I said unto them [the poor of the flock], If it is good in your eyes, give

¹ Mk. xiv. 10, 11; Mt. xxvi. 14-16; Lu. xxii. 3-6; Jo. xiii. 2, 27.

² Mk. xiv. 11.

³ Mt. xxvi. 16.

⁴ Mt. xxvii. 9.

me my hire ; and if not, forbear. And they weighed for my hire thirty pieces of silver.”¹ Matthew and Mark merely state that Judas betrayed his master, giving no reason for his conduct. Luke, however, represents it as a consequence of Satan having entered into him ;² while John in like manner states that the devil put it into his heart, and even knows the very moment when Satan entered into him.³ This Evangelist alone places the first steps taken by Judas after the last supper, instead of before it, and strangely enough so arranges the course of events, that he only acts upon the resolution to betray him after a distinct declaration by Jesus that he was about to do so.

Slightly anticipating the course of the narrative, we may mention here the singular myth of the unhappy end of the traitor Judas ; a myth which is of peculiar interest inasmuch as its origin is distinctly traceable to a mistranslation of a verse in Zechariah. The passage quoted above continues thus : “ And Jehovah spoke to me : Throw it to the treasure, the costly mantle with which I am honoured by them ; and I took the thirty pieces of silver and threw them into the temple of Jehovah to the treasure.” But the word here used for treasure commonly signifies potter,⁴ and was hence interpreted “ Throw it to the potter.”⁵ Out of this mistake arose the story that Judas, ashamed of his bargain, returned the money to the chief priests,

¹ Zech. xi. 12, 13. According to Ewald, this portion of Zechariah is by an anonymous prophet contemporaneous with Isaiah.

² Lu. xxii. 3.

³ Jo. xiii. 2, 27.

⁴ **יָצָר**, potter ; **אֲצִיזָה**, treasure.

⁵ The word used in the LXX. is *χωνευτήριον* ; a crucible, or smelting-place.

who, deeming it unlawful to put it in the treasury, bought therewith the "potter's field to bury strangers in." Thus, observes Matthew, "was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet." Judas, having parted with his ill-gotten gain, committed suicide by hanging.¹ So at least says Matthew; but Luke, making confusion worse confounded, represents Judas himself as purchasing the field "with the reward of iniquity;" after which he fell headlong, and bursting in the middle, his bowels gushed out.² Of this notorious fact, "known," according to the Acts of the Apostles, "to all the dwellers at Jerusalem," Matthew at least was wholly ignorant. But both versions equally originate in the defective Hebrew of the translators of Zechariah.

In all the synoptical Gospels, the celebration of the passover by Jesus and his disciples succeeds the secret arrangement of Judas with the high priests. He kept it in Jerusalem, in the house of a man whose name is not mentioned, but who must have been one of his adherents. The encounter with this man is represented in two of the three versions as something miraculous. On the first day of unleavened bread Jesus told two of his disciples (according to Mark), James and John (according to Luke), to go into Jerusalem, where they would meet a man bearing a pitcher of water. Him they were to follow, and wherever he went in, they were to say to the master of the house, "Where is the guest-chamber, where I may eat the passover with my disciples?" He would then show them a large furnished upper room, where

¹ Mt. xxvii. 3-10.² Acts i. 18, 19.

they were to prepare it. Nothing but a perfectly natural version of all this appears in Matthew. There Jesus tells his disciples to go into the city to So-and-so (the name therefore having been given), and tell him that he wished to keep the passover at his house.¹ Here again we see how easily a wondrous tale may originate in a very simple fact.

Supper was accordingly prepared in the man's house, and Jesus ate the passover there with his disciples. At this supper, according to all the Gospels, he mentioned the fact that one of them would betray him. Whether in so doing he actually named the traitor is uncertain. Mark's account is that when he had predicted that one would betray him, the disciples in sorrow inquired one by one, "Is it I?" and that Jesus told them it was the one who dipped with him in the dish. Luke leaves it still more indefinite. There Jesus merely says, "the hand of him that betrays me is with me on the table," and no further inquiry is made by any one. Matthew, like Mark, represents each disciple as asking whether he was the one, and Jesus as giving the same indication about the dish. But he adds that Judas himself asked, "Is it I?" and that Jesus answered, "Thou hast said." Quite different is the account in John. There, instead of all the disciples inquiring whether it was he, a single disciple, leaning on the breast of Jesus, asks, on a sign from Peter, who it was to be. Jesus does not reply that it was he who dipped in the dish, but he to whom he should give a sop. He then gives the sop to Judas, and tells him to do quickly that which

¹ Mk. xiv. 12-16 ; Mt. xxvi. 17-19 ; Lu. xxii. 7-13.

he is about to do ; words understood by no one present.¹ The improbability of any of these stories is obvious. In the three first, Judas is pointed out to all the eleven as a man who is about to give up their master to punishment, and probable death, yet no step was taken or even suggested by any of them either to impede the false disciple in his movements, or to save Jesus by flight and concealment. The announcement is taken as quietly as if it were an everyday occurrence that was referred to. John's narrative avoids this difficulty by supposing the intimation that Judas was the man to be conveyed by a private signal understood only by Peter and the disciple next to Jesus. These two may have felt it necessary to keep the secret, but why then could they not understand the words of Jesus to Judas, or why not at least inquire whether they had reference to his treachery, which had just before been so plainly intimated ? That Jesus, with his keen vision, may have divined the proceedings of Judas, is quite possible ; that he could have spoken of them at table in this open way without exciting more attention, is hardly credible.

It was at this same passover that Christ, conscious of his approaching end, blessed the bread and the cup of wine, and giving them to his disciples, told them that the one was his body, and the other his blood in the new testament, or the new testament of his blood.² John, who is confused about dates in this part of his biography, supposes that this supper took place before the feast of the passover, instead of at it, and, consis-

¹ Mk. xiv. 17-21 ; Mt. xxvi. 20-25 ; Lu. xxii. 21, 22 ; Jo. xiii. 21-28.

² Mk. xiv. 22-25 ; Mt. xxvi. 26-29 ; Lu. xxii. 14-21 ; 1 Cor. xi. 23-25.

tently with this view, he says nothing of the institution of the Eucharist, which had a peculiar reference to the Jewish feast-day. Instead thereof, he introduces another ceremony, of which neither the other Evangelists nor Paul say a word; that of washing the disciples' feet by Jesus. This was done to make them "clean every whit" (though it had no such effect on Judas), and also to set them an example of mutual kindness.¹

The passover eaten, Jesus retired with his disciples to the Mount of Olives. Being in a prophetic mood, he foretold that all his disciples would forsake him in the hour of danger now approaching, and that Peter would deny him. This Peter resented, though it was destined to be soon fulfilled. After this Jesus went to Gethsemane, and taking his three principal disciples apart from the rest, told them that his soul was sorrowful unto death, and begged them to remain and watch while he prayed. Going a little forward, he prayed earnestly that the coming trial might pass from him, yet with submission to God's will. Returning, he found his three friends asleep, and this happened twice again, these devoted men sleeping calmly on until the very moment when the officers of the Sanhedrim came to arrest their Lord. Luke adorns this scene—which he places at the Mount of Olives without mentioning the garden of Gethsemane—with ampler details. Mark and Matthew know nothing of the exact distance of Jesus from his disciples; Luke knows that it was about a stone's throw. Moreover, all the number are present, not only Peter, James, and John. Sweat like drops of blood falls from Christ.

¹ Jo. xiii. 4-17.

An angel appears to strengthen him. All this is new; as is the representation that the disciples were sleeping from sorrow,—a motive which the Evangelist no doubt felt it needful to assign in order to vindicate their honour. The other two biographers, who content themselves with saying that “Their eyes were heavy,” certainly keep more within the limits of probability.¹

No sooner was the prayer concluded than Judas, accompanied by a large *posse comitatus* armed with swords and staves, came from the Jewish authorities. Resistance to the arrest must have been expected, and not wholly without reason; for as soon as the officers, in obedience to the preconcerted signal of a kiss from Judas, had seized Jesus, one of his party drew a sword and cut off the ear of the high priest’s servant. This incident is related in various ways in all the Gospels. In Mark, Jesus addresses no rebuke to the disciple who commits this action. In Matthew, he tells him to put up his sword, for all who take the sword shall perish by the sword. In Luke, the progress to greater definiteness which has been noted as characterising these semi-historical myths has begun. In the first place, before going to the Mount of Olives, the disciples provide themselves with two swords; and Jesus, on their mentioning the fact, says, “It is enough.” Then the writer knows that it was the right ear which was cut off. More than this, he gives artistic finish to the whole by making Jesus touch the place and heal the wound; though whether

¹ Mk. xiv. 32-42; Mt. xxvi. 36-46; Lu. xxii. 39-46.

a new ear grew, or the old one was put on again, he does not tell us. More definite still is the version in John. This Evangelist, as we saw in another case, is fond of supplying names. Thus, he pretends to know here that it was Peter who cut off the ear, and that its owner was called Malchus. Peter is called to order in his version, but Malchus is not healed. Plainly it was the sense of justice of the third Evangelist that made him shrink from leaving an innocent dependent in this mutilated condition, when he knew that Christ might so easily have restored the missing member.

While in the synoptical Gospels it is Judas who by a kiss points out Jesus, in John it is Jesus himself who comes forward to declare himself. Hereupon the party deputed by the priests go backwards and fall to the ground. They soon recover themselves enough to arrest him. In all the versions he suffers himself to be quietly taken, while in all but John he resents, with much dignity, the sending of such a force against him, as though he had been a thief; while in fact he had often taught openly in the temple and had not been stopped. Their master once taken, the courage of the disciples was at an end. They all fled. Jesus was brought before the Sanhedrim, and evidence, of the tenor of which we are not informed, was produced against him. Lastly, two witnesses deposed that they had heard him say, "I am able to destroy this temple, and in three days to rebuild it;" or, "I will destroy this temple made with hands, and will build another not made with hands in three days." Mark endeavours to depreciate these wit-

nesses by saying that their evidence did not agree; and he himself is liable to the remark that his report of their evidence does not agree with that of Matthew, while in neither Gospel does the utterance attributed by these men to Jesus tally exactly with that assigned to him in John, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."¹ The agreement, however, is close enough to render it probable that some such expression was used, and some such evidence given. Neither Luke nor John know anything of witnesses against Jesus. But Luke, in common with the other synoptical Gospels, asserts that he not only admitted, but emphatically confirmed the charge—distinctly put to him by the high priest—of being the Son of God. On this confession he was unanimously found guilty of blasphemy.

Wholly different is the conduct of the trial in John, whose account, moreover, is confused and ill-written in the extreme. With his usual proneness to give names, he says that Jesus was taken first before Annas, the father-in-law of Caiaphas the high priest. Annas sent him bound to Caiaphas. The high priest (the council is not alluded to) carried on an informal conversation with Jesus, inquiring about his doctrine and disciples; questions which the latter, on the plea of the publicity of his teaching, refused to answer. There is no mention of blasphemy; no conviction on any charge; no expression of opinion on the part of Caiaphas; though from the fact that he committed the prisoner for

¹ Jo. ii. 19.

trial before the Roman court, it may be inferred that he considered him guilty.¹

During the trial by the Sanhedrim, a singular scene was passing in the ante-room. There Peter, who alone of the disciples had followed his master (for the mention of another is peculiar to John), was warming himself among the attendants. Questioned by maids and officers of the court whether he had not been among the disciples of the accused, he vehemently, three several times, repudiated the supposition, though his Galilean accent told heavily against him. According to John, the question was put on the third occasion by a relative of Malchus, who had seen him in the garden. The other Evangelists are less specific. Now Jesus had foretold that Peter would thus deny him, and that his falsehoods would be followed by the crowing of a cock. Immediately after the last denial, this signal occurred; and Peter, according to all the Gospels but the fourth, went out and wept over his meanness.²

Convicted by the Sanhedrim, the prisoner was now placed at the bar of the civil tribunal. The procurator of Judæa at this time was a man named Pontius Pilatus. His character does not stand high. Neander terms him "an image of the corruption which then prevailed among distinguished Romans."³ Appointed in the year 23, he was recalled in 37 on

¹ Mk. xiv. 43-65; Mt. xxvi. 47-68; Lu. xxii. 47-53, and 63-71; Jo. xviii. 3-14, and 19-24.

² Mk. xiv. 26-30, and 66-72; Mt. xxvi. 30-35, and 69-75; Lu. xxii. 33, 34, and 55-62; Jo. xiii. 37, 38, and xviii. 15-18, and 25-27.

³ *Leben Jesu*, p. 687.

account of the slaughter of some Samaritans in a battle. He had insulted the prejudices of the people he governed by setting up the standards of the Roman army within the walls of Jerusalem, and had threatened an armed attack upon the peaceable Jews who went to Cæsarea to remonstrate against this novel measure. On another occasion he had taken some of the revenues of the temple to construct an aqueduct, and when the work was interrupted by the people, had set disguised soldiers upon them, who killed them without mercy.

Such a man was not likely to be excessively troubled by scruples about the execution of an innocent victim. On the other hand, it is perfectly possible that he might, comparing the prisoner with the prosecutors, prefer the former. Having no love for the Jewish people, an object of their antipathy might become to a certain extent an object of his sympathy. But beyond this, it would be absurd to suppose that a man of the character of Jesus would inspire him with any sort of regard, or that he would hesitate to take his life if it suited his purpose. The simplest account of the trial bears out this expectation. Questioned by Pilate as to the charge preferred against him; of claiming to be the king of the Jews, the prisoner answered by an admission of its truth: "Thou sayest it." To other accusations urged against him by the priests he made no reply. Pilate wondered at his silence, and endeavoured, but without success, to extract an answer. While the conduct of the accused man must have appeared to him not a little strange, Pilate may also have thought that the pretensions to kingship of a peaceable fanatic, with but

few and obscure followers, were nowise dangerous to the Roman government. It was his custom at this festival to release a prisoner, leaving the people, or the Jewish authorities, to decide whom. He now proposed to release Jesus, but the suggestion was not accepted, and the liberation of a well-known political prisoner, who had been engaged in an insurrectionary enterprise, was demanded instead. Pilate naturally enough preferred the would-be Messiah to the actual rebel. The Jews as naturally preferred the rebel. They clamoured for the crucifixion of Jesus, and Pilate—afraid perhaps that by too much anxiety to save him he would expose himself to misrepresentation before Tiberius—gave way to their demand.

So far Mark; and as to the charge against Jesus, and the procurator's treatment of it, the other Evangelists are all at one with him. But each has adorned the trial with additional incidents after his own fashion. Matthew has a ridiculous story of an interference with the course of justice by Pilate's wife, who on the strength of a dream entreated him to have nothing to do with "that just man." Matthew, as we have seen before, was a great believer in dreams. Then he is so desirous of clearing the character of the Roman, that he describes him as washing his hands in token of his innocence before the multitude, who cry out that the blood of Jesus is to be on them and their children. In Luke, there is a new variation. Learning that Jesus was a Galilean, Pilate sent him to Herod, who had long been anxious to see him, but who could not now induce him to answer any of his questions. Herod, like Pilate, found no fault in him, and sent him back after treating him

with ridicule. Pilate's reluctance to convict Jesus is much magnified in this Gospel. He insists on Herod's inability, as well as his own, to discover any capital offence committed by him, and three several times proposes to the prosecution to chastise him and then dismiss him. In John, the conversation of Pilate with Jesus is wholly different. In the first place, it takes place alone, or at any rate in the absence of the accusers, for these had refused to be defiled by entering the court; and Pilate is represented as going out to them to inquire into the charge. This is to suit the blunder about dates committed in this Gospel, according to which the last supper was before, and the trial at the very time of, the passover. The Jews, therefore, stand without, and the prisoner is within. The prisoner does not refuse, as in all the other versions, to answer Pilate's questions, but enters at some length into his doctrine, explaining the unworldly nature of his kingdom. Pilate places the purple robe and the crown of thorns upon him before his condemnation, instead of after it, and then tells the Jews that he finds no fault in him. Yet after this he desires them to crucify him, although he was guiltless. Hereupon the Jews tell him that he had made himself the Son of God. At this, Pilate is frightened, and enters into further conversation with Jesus. After hearing him expound another theory, he is still very anxious to release him, but is forced to yield by an intimation that no friend of Cæsar's would protect a rival to the throne.¹ Anything more utterly improbable than this scene it is difficult to

¹ Mk. xv. 1-14; Mt. xxvii. 1, 2, and 11-25; Lu. xxiii. 1-23; Jo. xviii. 28-40.

imagine. The pictures of the Roman governor of Judæa going backwards and forwards between accusers and accused; listening to the theological fancies of the accused; helpless against the pressure of the accusers; alarmed at the pretensions to divinity of a young Galilean artisan; are sufficient in themselves to stamp this Gospel with the mark of unverity.

Sentenced to death, Jesus was now scourged; a purple robe was put upon him, and a crown of thorns about his head (not upon it, as was afterwards said); he was saluted in mockery as king of the Jews, and smitten with a reed upon the head. After this cruel ceremony he was led out to Golgotha to be crucified, a man named Simon being compelled to bear his cross.¹ Luke is singular in the introduction of a large company of women who follow Jesus to the crucifixion and draw from him a prophecy of terrible evils to come upon them and their children; for themselves, and not for him, they were to weep.² The other versions say nothing of any friends or followers, male or female, as being present at this period, though they do mention many women as looking on from a distance during the crucifixion. These, however, were not daughters of Jerusalem (like the women in Luke), but Galilean admirers who had followed him to the capital. His mother was certainly not among them, or she could not fail to have been mentioned in the synoptical Gospels; whereas the only names we meet with are those of Mary Magdalene; Mary, mother of James and Joses; and Salome, apparently the same person as the mother of Zebedee's children.³

¹ Mk. xv. 15-21; Mt. xxvii. 26-32; Lu. xxiii. 24-26; Jo. xix. 1-16.

² Lu. xxiii. 27-31.

³ Mk. xv. 40, 41; Mt. xxvii. 55, 56.

These were among the spectators of the melancholy end of him who had been their teacher and their friend. He was crucified between two criminals, with an inscription on his cross which is differently reported in every Gospel, but of which the substance was that he was the king of the Jews. A stupifying drink which Matthew (in accordance with a supposed prophecy)¹ calls vinegar and gall, was offered him by the executioners ; not, as Luke supposes, in mockery, but with the humane intention of allaying the pain. His clothes were divided among the party of soldiers ; a circumstance in which the Evangelists as usual endeavour to see the fulfilment of prophecy. In Psalm xxii. 18, we read : "They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture." The Synoptics content themselves here with stating that the soldiers drew lots for his clothing, but John, anxious to fulfil this prophecy in the most literal manner possible, pretends that they divided the articles of his apparel into four parts, but finding the coat without seam, agreed not to tear it, but to apportion it by lot. Luke is the sole reporter of a saying of Jesus uttered in his last moments : "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."²

The pangs of death must have been greatly embittered to Jesus if it be true that not only the priests and passers-by, but the very criminals who were crucified with him, ridiculed his claim to be king of Israel, and suggested that he should prove it to demonstration by saving himself from the cross. All

¹ Ps. lxix. 21.

² Mk. xv. 23-28 ; Mt. xxvii. 34-38 ; Lu. xxiii. 32-34, 36 ; Jo. xix. 17-24.

the synoptical Gospels agree in this account, with the single exception that Luke includes only one of the malefactors among the scorners. According to this Gospel, the other rebuked his fellow-convict for his misbehaviour, and addressed to him a few moral remarks; which, however, were perhaps not quite disinterested, for at its close he requested Jesus to remember him in his kingdom, and received an ample reward in the shape of a promise from the latter that he should be with him that day in Paradise. But where was the impenitent criminal to be? About his fate there is an ominous obscurity, and it evidently did not occur to the writer that the forgiveness which Jesus had just been praying his Father to grant his enemies, he might himself have extended to this miserable man.¹

Another incident of the closing hours of Jesus is known to the fourth Evangelist alone. According to the others, the women who watched him expire were standing far off. But according to John, his mother Mary, her sister, and Magdalene were all at the foot of the cross. There also was the disciple whom Jesus loved, and who in the three other Gospels had run away. Before he died, Jesus committed his mother to the care of this disciple as to a son, and he afterwards took her home. The dogmatic purpose of this story is evident. Mary had not been converted by her son during his lifetime, and it was important to bring her to the foot of the cross at his death, and to place her in this close connection with one of his principal disciples.²

¹ Mk. xv. 29-32; Mt. xxvii. 39-44; Lu. xxiii. 35-43.

² Jo. xix. 25-27.

As to the last words of Jesus, there is an amount of divergence which shows that no account can be regarded as trustworthy. Mark and Matthew both relate that he called out, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?" an exclamation which he may really have uttered, or which, as coming from a prophetic Psalm, may have seemed to them appropriate. Hereupon a sponge of vinegar was offered him under the impression that he was calling Elias, and with a loud cry he gave up the ghost. In Luke he cries loudly, and then says, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." With these words (also from one of the Psalms) upon his lips, he dies. In John he says, "I am thirsty;" and after receiving some vinegar, adds, "It is finished;" and bowing his head, gives up the ghost.¹

With the death of Christ, and indeed immediately before it, we pass from the region of mixed history and mythology into that of pure mythology. With the exception of his burial, all that follows has been deliberately invented. The wonders attendant upon his closing hours belong in part to the typical order of myths, and in part to an order peculiar to himself. The darkness from the sixth to the ninth hour, the rending of the temple veil, the earthquake, the rending of the rocks, are altogether like the prodigies attending the decease of other great men. The centurion's exclamation, "Truly this man was just," or "Truly this man was the son of God" (it is differently reported), is a myth belonging peculiarly to Christ, and designed to exhibit the enforced confession of his greatness by an incredulous Roman. In Matthew,

¹ Mk. xv. 34-37 ; Mt. xxvii. 46-50 ; Lu. xxiii. 46 ; Jo. xix. 28-30.

where the more modest narratives of Mark and Luke are greatly improved upon by additional details, it is further added that many bodies of saints arose, and after the resurrection appeared to many in Jerusalem.¹

John, who knows nothing whatever of the darkness, the accident to the temple veil, the revival of the saints, or the centurion's exclamation, has a myth of his own constructed for the especial purpose of fulfilling certain prophecies. The next day being a festival, the Jews, he says, were anxious that the bodies should not remain on the crosses. They therefore requested Pilate to break their legs and remove them. He ordered this to be done, and the legs of the two criminals were broken, but not those of Jesus, who was already dead; one of the soldiers, however, pierced his side, from which blood and water gushed out. The writer adds a strong asseveration of his veracity, but immediately betrays himself by letting out that in relating the omission to break the legs of Jesus he was comparing him to the Paschal lamb, of whom not a bone was to be broken; while in telling of the soldier who pierced his side, he was thinking of a phrase in Zechariah: "They shall look upon me whom they have pierced."²

The burial of the body took place quietly. Joseph of Arimathæa, a secret admirer of Jesus, placed it in a new sepulchre of his own. With him John associates a character who exists only in his Gospel, Nicodemus, and whom he introduces here as taking some part in the interment. To the circumstance of the burial in the rock sepulchre, Matthew adds an

¹ Mk. xv. 33-39; Mt. xxvii. 45, and 51-54; Lu. xxiii. 44-47.

² Zech. xii. 10; Jo. xix. 31-37.

audacious fiction of his own ; namely, that the chief priests, remembering Christ's prediction that he should rise on the third day, obtained leave to seal the stone of the tomb and keep it watched, lest the disciples should take the body by night and pretend that he was risen.¹

Certainly if the Evangelist had meant to convey the impression that no human means could prevent the resurrection of Christ, he would have been perfectly right. An actual body was not necessary for the purpose. For the legends appertaining to the resurrection belong to a region in which imagination, unhampered by the controlling influence of historical fact, has been permitted the freest play. Of the appearances of Jesus after his death we have accounts by no less than seven different hands, each story being distinct from, though not always inconsistent with, the other six. Let us begin with what is probably the oldest of all, containing but a germ of the rest ; the first eight verses of the last chapter of Mark. There we are told that on the day after the Sabbath, Mary Magdalene, Mary James's mother, and Salome went to the sepulchre at sunrise. They found it empty, the stone having been rolled away. A young man in white clothes was sitting in it. He told them that Jesus was risen, and desired them to tell the disciples that he was going to Galilee, where they would see him. All that follows in this Gospel is added by a later hand, and the very first verse of the addition is plainly written in total disregard of what has just preceded it. Observe then that *the simplest form of the story of the resurrection*

¹ Mk. xv. 42-47 ; Mt. xxvii. 57-66 ; Lu. xxiii. 50-56 ; Jo. xix. 38-42.

*contains no mention of any actual appearance of Jesus whatever, but merely an assertion that the body was not in the tomb, and that a man, sitting inside it, made certain statements to three women. To this the forger has added that Jesus appeared first to Magdalene, whose account, given to the disciples, was disbelieved by them ; secondly, to two disciples while walking, whose evidence was also disbelieved ; thirdly, to the eleven at dinner, to whom he addressed a discourse.*¹

The writer of the first Gospel is much more elaborate. He was a little embarrassed by the guards whom he had set to watch the tomb, whom it was essential to find some convenient method of getting out of the way. Like Mark, he takes the two Marys (not Salome) to the sepulchre early on the first day of the week ; unlike Mark, he does not make them examine the tomb and find it deserted. On the contrary, there is an earthquake (the author is rather fond of these natural convulsions), and an angel with a face like lightning, clothed in the purest white, descends. He rolls back the stone and sits upon it. His appearance so terrifies the keepers that they become like corpses. The angel tells the women that Jesus is risen, and that they are to let the disciples know that he would go before them to Galilee, where they would see him. As they are engaged on this errand, Jesus himself appears and gives them a similar injunction. The second appearance occurred before the eleven disciples, who saw him at an appointed place in Galilee, " but some doubted." Here Jesus addressed to them a parting discourse, and this Gospel does not state how or when he quitted

¹ Mk. xvi.

them. The awkward circumstance of the presence of the guards, who had certainly not testified to the angel's descent, had still to be surmounted. This is accomplished by a ridiculous story that they had been heavily bribed by the priests and elders to say that the disciples had stolen the body while they were asleep.¹

Unlike either of the preceding writers, Luke conceives the first appearance of the risen Christ to have been, not to the women, but to two disciples. He does indeed relate that on the morning of the first day of the week Magdalene, Mary, Joanna, and other women went to the tomb, and found the stone rolled away and the body gone. While they were wondering at this, two men in shining garments stood by them, and told them that he whom they sought was risen. They returned to report to the apostles, to whom their words seemed as idle tales. Peter, however, ran to the sepulchre to verify their statement, and found only the clothes in it. Two of the disciples were going that same day to Emmaus. While walking and talking, a stranger joined them and entered into a conversation, in which he expounded the prophecies relating to the Messiah. They requested this man to remain with them for the night at the house where they were lodging. During supper he took bread, blessed it, broke it, and gave it to them; whereupon they recognised him as Jesus, and he vanished from their eyes. On returning to Jerusalem, they found the eleven and the rest asserting that Christ was risen and had appeared to Peter. The two wanderers related their experiences in their turn.

¹ Mt. xxviii.

While the disciples were talking, Jesus himself appeared in their midst, and said, "Peace unto you." Some sceptical doubts, however, troubled them even now, for Jesus thought it necessary to prove his actual carnality by showing his hands and feet, as well as by eating some broiled fish and a piece of honeycomb. After this he "opened their understanding" by an expository discourse in reference to some of his own sayings and to the Scriptures; concluding with an exhortation to remain at Jerusalem till they were endowed with power from on high.¹ This last passage is explained by the same author in the Acts of the Apostles to refer to the descent of the Holy Ghost upon the apostles, which in that work is much more definitely promised by Jesus.² We also find in it an important addition to the details furnished by the Gospel about the resurrection; namely, that Jesus was seen by his disciples for forty days after his physical death, during which time he kept speaking to them about matters pertaining to the kingdom of God.³

Directly contradicting Mark and Matthew, John states that Magdalene (no one else is mentioned) went to the sepulchre while it was still dark (not at dawn or sunrise), and found the stone taken away. Making no further inspection, she ran to Peter and to the beloved disciple, saying that the body had been abstracted. The two ran together to the place, and going in, found the clothes lying in the tomb, whereupon the beloved disciple "saw and believed," though what he believed is not stated. Magdalene was standing outside; but after the two men had concluded their examination she entered, and saw what they had not seen—two

¹ Lu. xxii. 1-49.

² Acts i. 5, 8.

³ Acts i. 3.

angels, sitting one at each end of the place where the body had been. These angels asked her why she was weeping ; she answered, because her Lord's body had been taken. Turning round, she saw a man whom she at first took for the gardener, but whom she soon recognised as Jesus. She returned and informed the disciples that she had seen him. The same day, in the evening, Jesus appeared to the disciples, said, "Peace unto you," and showed them his hands and feet. He then breathed the Holy Ghost into them, and gave them authority to remit or retain sins. Thomas, who was not present on this occasion, roundly refused to believe these facts unless he himself could touch the marks of the nails, and put his hand into the side. A week later Jesus again appeared, and Thomas was now enabled to dispel his doubts by actual examination of his person. To these three appearances, with which the genuine Gospel closed, a later hand has added a fourth. According to this new writer, a number of disciples were about to fish on the lake of Tiberias, when Christ was observed standing on the shore. The miraculous draught of fishes is introduced here in a form slightly different from that which it has in Luke. By acting on a direction from Jesus, the disciples caught a vast number. He then bade them come and dine with him, which they did. After dinner, he instructed Peter to feed his flock, and hinted that the beloved disciple might possibly live till his return in glory.¹

Completely different from any of these narratives is the account of the resurrection contributed by Paul. It is somewhat confused and difficult to understand.

¹ Jo. xx. xxi.

Christ, he says, rose on the third day according to the Scriptures, and was seen by Cephas; then by the twelve; after that by more than 500 brethren; after that by James; next by all the apostles; and lastly by himself.¹ It is to be noted that since Paul does not say that Christ appeared *first* to Cephas, we may if we please combine with this account one of those which make him appear first to Magdalene, or to her and other women. But even then the difficulties do not disappear. For how could so notorious an event as the manifestation of Christ to 500 people be passed over *sub silentio* in all the Gospels and in the Acts? And granting that Paul may by an oversight have put "the twelve" for "the eleven," are we not compelled to suppose that "all the apostles" are distinct from "the twelve," and if so, who are they? What, again, are we to think of the appearance to James, of which nothing is said elsewhere? Above all, what are we to think of the fact that the purely spiritual vision granted to Paul, which was not even seen by his travelling companions, is placed by him exactly on a level with all the other reappearances of Christ, the physical reality of which so much trouble has been taken to prove?

Comparing now the several narratives of the resurrection with one another, we find this general result. In Mark, Jesus is said to have appeared three times:—

1. To Mary Magdalene.
2. To two disciples.
3. To the disciples at meat.

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 3-8.

Two such appearances only are recorded in Matthew :—

1. To the women.
2. To the eleven in Galilee.

In Luke he appears :—

1. To Cleopas and his companion.
2. To Peter.
3. To the eleven and others.

In the two last chapters of John the appearances amount to four :—

1. To Mary Magdalene.
2. To the disciples without Thomas.
3. To the disciples with Thomas.
4. To several disciples on the Tiberias lake.

Paul extends them to six :—

1. To Peter.
2. To the twelve.
3. To more than 500.
4. To James.
5. To all the apostles.
6. To Paul.

Upon this most momentous question, then, every one of the Christian writers is at variance with every other. Nor is this all, for two of the number bring the earthly career of Jesus to its final close in a manner so extraordinary that we cannot even imagine the occurrence of such an event, of necessity so notorious and so impressive, to have been believed by the other biographers, and yet to have been passed over by them without a word of notice or allusion. Can it be for a moment supposed that two out of the four Evangelists had heard of the ascension of Christ—that

most wonderful termination of a wonderful life—and either forgot to mention, or deliberately omitted it? And may it not be assumed that Paul, when detailing the several occasions on which Christ had been seen after his crucifixion, must needs, had he known of it, have included this, perhaps the most striking of all, in his list? In fact the ascension rests entirely on the evidence of two witnesses, both of them comparatively late ones, the forger of the last verses of Mark, and the third Evangelist. Neither of them stand as near the events described as the true author of Mark, as Matthew, or as Paul, from no one of whom do we hear a word of the ascension. Nor do even these two witnesses relate their story in the same terms. The finisher of Mark merely tells us that after his parting charge to the eleven, he was received into heaven and sat on God's right hand; a statement couched in such general terms as even to leave it doubtful whether there was any distinct and visible ascension, or whether Jesus was merely taken to heaven like any other virtuous man, though enjoying when there a higher precedence.¹ Especially is this doubt fostered by the fact that this Gospel, when speaking of the witnesses to Christ's resurrection, never alludes to any of the physical proofs of his actual existence so much dwelt upon in Luke and the last chapter of John. Very much more definite is the statement at the close of the third Gospel. There it is related that Jesus led his disciples out to Bethany, where he blessed them, and that, in the very act of blessing, he was parted from them and carried up into heaven.² The same author subsequently composed the Acts of the Apostles,

¹ Mk. xvi. 19.

² Lu. xxiv. 50, 51.

and in the interim he had greatly improved upon his previous conception of the ascension. When he came to write the Acts, he was able to supply, what he had omitted before, the last conversation of the master with the disciples he was about to leave; he knows too that after the final words — no blessing is mentioned here — he was taken up and received by a cloud; that while the disciples were gazing up, two men in white — no doubt the very couple who had been seen at the sepulchre — were perceived standing by them, and that these celestial visitors told them that Jesus would return from heaven in the same way in which he had gone to it.¹ Unhappy Galileans! little could they have dreamt for how many centuries after that day their successors would watch and wait, watching and waiting in vain, for the fulfilment of that consoling prophecy.

Casting a retrospective glance at the stories of the Resurrection and the Ascension, we may perhaps discern at least a psychological explanation of their origin and of the currency they obtained. Whatever other qualities Jesus may have possessed or lacked, there can be no question that he had one—that of inspiring in others a strong attachment to himself. He had in his brief career surrounded himself with devoted disciples; and he was taken from their midst in the full bloom of his powers by a violent and early death. Now there are some who have been taught by the bitter experience of their lives how difficult, nay, how impossible

¹ Acts i. 9-11.

it is to realise in imagination the fact that a beloved companion is in truth gone from them for ever. More especially will this mental difficulty be felt when he whom death has parted from our sides is young, vigorous, full of promise; when the infinite stillness of eternal rest has succeeded almost without a break upon the joyous activity of a well-spent life; when the being who is now no more was but a moment ago the moving spirit of a household, or the honoured teacher of a band of friends who were linked together by his presence.

Where the association has been close and constant; where we have been accustomed to share our thoughts and to impart our feelings; where, therefore, we have habitually entwined not only our present lives, but our hopes and wishes for the future around the personality of the dead, this refusal of the mind to comprehend its loss is strongest of all. Emotion enters then upon a strange conflict with Reason. Reason may tell us but too distinctly that all hope of the return of the beloved one to life is vain and foolish. But Emotion speaks to us in another language. Wellnigh does it prevent us from believing even the ghastly realities which our unhappy eyes have been compelled to witness. Deep within us there arises the craving for the presence of our friend, and with it the irrepressible thought that he may even yet come back to those who can scarcely bear to live without him. Were these inevitable longings not to be checked by a clear perception that they originate in our own broken hearts, we should fancy that we saw the figure of the departed and heard his voice. In that case a resurrection would have taken place for us, and for

those who believed our tale. So far from the reappearance of the well-known form seeming to be strange, it is its failure to reappear that is strange to us in these times of sorrow. We fondly conceive that in some way the dead must still exist; and if so, can one, who was so tender before, listen to our cry of pain and refuse to come? can one, who soothed us in the lesser troubles of our lives, look on while we are suffering the greatest agony of all and fail to comfort? It cannot be. Imagination declines to picture the long future of solitude that lies before us. We cannot understand that we shall never again listen to the tones of the familiar voice; never feel the touch of the gentle hand; never be encouraged by the warm embrace that tells us we are loved, or find a refuge from miserable thoughts and the vexations of the world in the affectionate and ever-open heart. All this is too hard for us. We long for a resurrection; we should believe in it if we could; we do believe in it in sleep, when our feelings are free to roam at pleasure, unrestrained by the chilling presence of the material world. In dreams the old life is repeated again and again. Sometimes the lost one is beside us as of old, and we are quite untroubled by the thought of parting. Sometimes there is a strange and confusing consciousness that the great calamity has happened, or has been thought to happen, but that now we are again together, and that a new life has succeeded upon death. Or the dream takes a less definite form. We are united now; but along with our happiness in the union there is an oppressive sense of some mysterious terror clouding our enjoyment. We are afraid that it is an unsubstantial, shadowy being that is with us; the least touch may

dissipate its uncertain existence ; the slightest illness may extinguish its feeble breath. Granting only a strong emotion and a lively phantasy, we may comprehend at once how, in many lands, to many mourners, the images of their dreams may also become the visions of their waking hours. They see him again ; they know that he is not gone ; he is beside them still.

But for us, who live in a calmer age, and see with scientific eyes, there is no such comfort. Not to us can the bodily forms of those who have gone before us to the grave appear again in all the loveliness of life. 'In the first shock of our bereavement we may indeed indulge in some such visionary hope ; but as day after day passes by and leaves us in a solitude that does but deepen with the lapse of time, we learn to understand only too well that we are bereft for ever. Hope, gradually dwindling to a fainter and fainter remnant, is crushed at last by the miserable certainty of profound despair. Yet even then, the mind of man refuses to accept its fate. The scene of the reunion, which we cannot but so ardently desire, is postponed to another season and to a better world. Many are they to whom this final hope is an enduring consolation. But if even that should fail us in the hour of darkness, as the more primitive and simpler hope failed before it ; if here again emotion is reluctantly compelled to yield to reason ; then there is still one refuge in despondency, and a refuge of which we can never be deprived. It is the thought that death, so cruel now, will one day visit us with a kinder touch ; and that the tomb, which already holds the nearest and the dearest within its grasp, will open to receive us also in our turn to its everlasting peace.

SUBDIVISION 3.—*The Ideal Jesus.*

The Gospel attributed by the current legend to St John differs from the other three Gospels in almost every respect in which difference is possible. The events recorded are different. The order of events is different. The conversations of Jesus are different. His sermons are different. His opinions are different. The theories of the writer about him are different. Were it not for the name and a few leading incidents, we should be compelled to say that the subject of the biography himself is different. A more conspicuous unlikeness than that of the synoptical to the Johannine Jesus it is not easy to conceive in two narratives which depict the same hero. In the synoptical Gospels Jesus is plain, direct, easy of comprehension, and fond of illustrating his meaning by short and simple parables. In John he is obscure, mystical, symbolic, and of his favourite method of teaching by parables there is not a trace. Both descriptions cannot be true. It would be monstrous to suppose either that the synoptical Gospels omitted some of his most extraordinary miracles and some of his most remarkable discourses, or that the Gospel of John passed over in silence the whole of that side of his character which is portrayed in the ethical maxims, the parables, and the exhortations of its predecessors. Were it so, none of the four could be accepted as other than an extremely one-sided and imperfect biography, and each of them is plainly regarded by its author as complete within itself. None of them refers to extraneous sources to supplement its own deficiencies. The concluding verse of the fourth Gospel does indeed allude

to many unrecorded actions of Jesus, which, if they were all written, would fill more books than the world could contain. But, not to rely on the fact that the last chapter is spurious, these words contain no intimation that a mode of teaching completely different from that here recorded was ever employed by Jesus. And this is the point in which John's narrative is peculiar. Again, to turn to the Synoptics, there is no shadow of an intimation in them that, between the last supper and the arrest, Jesus addressed to his disciples a long and remarkable discourse, full of the most interesting revelations. Can we suppose that they could have forgotten it, delivered as it was at such a moment as this, the very last before their master's condemnation at which he was able to speak to them? Such a supposition is utterly untenable. The two traditions embodied in these versions of his life do not therefore, as some learned men—Ewald, for example—have supposed, supplement, but exclude one another.

Let us enter in detail into some of the peculiar characteristics of the Jesus of John. In the first place, we may note that his miracles are altogether new. One of them at least is so astounding that no biographer who had heard of it could have passed it by. The raising of Lazarus is the greatest feat that Jesus ever performed. In other cases he brought persons who were supposed to be just dead to life, but sceptical Jews might have suspected that they had never in reality died at all. Ample precautions against such cavils were taken in the case of Lazarus. This man lived at Bethany, and his sisters, Mary and Martha, were devoted admirers of Jesus. These women sent

word to Jesus, who had retired “beyond Jordan,” to say that their brother was ill. He replied that this illness was for the glory of God. After he had heard of it he remained two days in the same place. Then, disregarding the dissuasions of the disciples, who reminded him that the Jews had recently sought to stone him, he proceeded towards Judæa. He informed them, in that obscure manner which he almost invariably affects in this Gospel, that Lazarus was asleep; but on their misunderstanding him, consented to speak plainly and say that he was dead. He added that for their sakes he was glad he had not been there, in order that they might believe—even the disciples’ faith being apparently still in need of confirmation. On reaching Bethany, he found that Lazarus had been buried four days. Martha, who came to meet him, observed that had he been there, her brother would not have died, and that even now whatever he asked of God would be given. Jesus told her that her brother would rise again; a saying which she interpreted as referring to the general resurrection; but he replied that whoever believed in him would never die, and required of her an explicit declaration of her faith in this dogma. Martha evaded the inquiry by a profession of her conviction that he was the Christ, and went to summon Mary. She too remarked that if he had been there Lazarus would not have died. Distressed by her distress, Jesus himself wept. Going to the grave, he ordered the stone which covered it to be removed, in spite of Martha’s objection that putrefaction had set in. A curious scene followed. “Jesus lifted up his eyes and said, ‘Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. And I know

that thou hearest me always, but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me.'” We must suppose these last words to have been spoken *sotto voce*, for “the people which stood by” would have been little likely to believe in him had they known that the thanksgiving to God was a mere pious pretence, offered up for the purpose of impressing their imaginations by the event that was to follow. Knowing that his father always heard him, he certainly had no occasion to thank him on this one occasion; if indeed he could properly be thanked at all for taking the necessary measures to ensure the credit of his own son, in whom he desired mankind to believe, and who is over and over again described as one with himself. This is perhaps the only instance in any of the Gospels in which something like hypocrisy is ascribed to Jesus; in which he is represented as consciously acting a part for the benefit of the bystanders, and speaking simply with a view to effect. Happily for his reputation we are not obliged to believe in the accuracy of his biographer. After this he called loudly, “Lazarus, come forth.” The dead man accordingly arose, and came forth from the tomb clad in his graveclothes.¹ His restoration to life was permanent, for we find him afterwards among the guests at a supper to which Jesus was invited.²

Another singular miracle to which there is no allusion in any other Gospel is that which is here declared to be the first; the conversion of water into wine. Jesus was at a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and when the wine provided for the entertainment had all been

¹ Jo. xi. 1-46.

² Jo. xii. 2.

consumed, his mother informed him of the state of things. He gave her a repelling answer; but she told the servants to do what he bade them. He then ordered six water-pots to be filled with water, and the contents to be drawn. It was found that they contained wine of a superior quality to that at first provided.¹

The second miracle according to John is not unlike some of those recorded elsewhere. It consisted in the cure by a mere word, without visiting the place, of a nobleman's son who was on the point of death. This time also Jesus was at Cana, though the patient lay at Capernaum.² Another cure was wrought at the pool of Bethesda, the healing virtues of which are known only to this Gospel. A man who had long been lying on its steps, too infirm to descend at the proper moment, was enjoined to rise and walk, which he did.³ It is singular that although "a great multitude of impotent folk" were waiting at the pool, many of whom must needs have been kept long, since only one could be cured each time the water was troubled, this man alone was selected for the object of a miracle. Why were not all of them healed at once?

Not only are the most wonderful proofs of Christ's divinity contained in this Gospel unknown to the rest, but its *dramatis personæ* are in several respects altogether novel. Nathanael, whose difficulties about thinking that any good thing can come from Nazareth are overcome in a conversation with Jesus;⁴ Nicodemus, the secret adherent who came by night and received instruction in the doctrine of regener-

¹ Jo. ii. 1-11.

² Jo. iii. 46-54.

³ Jo. v. 1-9.

⁴ Jo. i. 45-51.

ation,¹ who at a later period supported him against the attacks of the Pharisees,² and lastly brought spices to his interment;³ Lazarus, brother of Mary and Martha, who owed him his life;⁴ the woman of Samaria, to whom an important prophecy was made, and whose past life he knew by intuition;⁵ are all new personages, and they hold no mean place in the story. The immediate attendants on his person are no doubt the same; but the representation that there was one disciple "whom Jesus loved" above the rest, and to whom a greater intimacy was permitted,⁶ is uncoun-tenanced by anything in the other Gospels; and indicates a fixed purpose of exalting the apostle John above his compeers.

While the scene, the persons, and the plot are thus diverse, the style of the principal actor is in striking contrast to that which he employs elsewhere. Its most conspicuous characteristic is the continual recurrence to symbols. It is true that in the other Gospels Jesus frequently exchanges the direct explanation of his views for the indirect method of illustration. But an illustration serves to clear up the meaning of a speaker; a symbol to disguise it. Illustrations cast light upon the principal thesis; symbols merely darken it. And this is the difference between the synoptical and the Johannine Jesus. The one is anxious to be understood; the other, in appearance at least, is seeking to perplex. Hence the exchange of the parable for the symbol. The number of such symbols in John is considerable. Jesus is continually inventing new ones.

¹ Jo. iii. 1-21.

² Jo. vii. 51.

³ Jo. xix. 39.

⁴ Jo. xi. 44; xii. 2.

⁵ Jo. iv. 1-30.

⁶ Jo. xiii. 23.

Near the beginning of the Gospel, he explains to Nicodemus that it is needful to be born again; a statement by which Nicodemus is considerably perplexed.¹ But his symbols are more generally applied to himself or his relations to the Father. He is the bread of life or the bread of God;² again, he is the living water,³ or he gives a water which prevents all future thirst;⁴ he is the true vine, his Father the husbandman, and his disciples the branches;⁵ elsewhere he is both the good shepherd and the door by which the sheep enter the fold;⁶ he is the way, the truth, and the life;⁷ he is the light that came into the world;⁸ or he is the Resurrection and the Life.⁹ John the Baptist, also, unlike the John of the other Gospels, adopts the same manner. Christ is spoken of by him as the Lamb of God, which takes away the sins of the world;¹⁰ or as the Bridegroom whose voice he rejoiced to hear, while he himself was but the Bridegroom's friend.¹¹ Sometimes "the Jews," as they are termed in this Gospel, are puzzled by the enigmatical style of Jesus, the sense of which they cannot unriddle. Thus, when he tells them that if they destroy the temple he will rebuild it in three days, they are naturally unable to perceive that he is speaking of the temple of his body.¹² They murmured because he spoke of himself as the Bread that came down from heaven, nor was any explanation offered them beyond a reiteration of the same statement.¹³ Not only the Jews, but also many of his own partisans, were hopelessly perplexed by

¹ Jo. iii. 3, 4.² Jo. vi. 33, 48.³ Jo.⁴ Jo. iv. 14.⁵ Jo. xv. 1-5.⁶ Jo. x. 7-16.⁷ Jo. xiv. 6.⁸ Jo. xii. 46; iii. 19.⁹ Jo. xi. 25.¹⁰ Jo. i. 29.¹¹ Jo. iii. 29.¹² Jo. ii. 19-21.¹³ Jo. vi. 41-51.

the statement that no one could have life in him who did not eat his flesh and drink his blood;¹ a statement which differs materially from that made at the passover (in the other Gospels), where the bread and wine were actually offered as signs of his flesh and blood, and the apostles alone (who were present) were required to receive them. At other times he confused them by mysterious intimations that he was going somewhere whither they could not come, and that they should seek him and be unable to find him.² On one occasion, his auditors were unable to comprehend his assertion that he must be lifted up, and requested him to explain it. The only reply was another enigma, namely, that the light was with them but a little while, and that they should believe in it while they had it.³ To such language they might well have retorted, that what they had from him was not light, but a twilight in which no object could be distinctly seen, and which never advanced towards clear daylight.

Closely connected with this tendency to speak in obscure images was his predilection for argument with the Jews on abstruse theological topics. In the other Gospels he teaches the people who surround him, and the subject of his teaching is generally the rules of moral conduct; comparatively seldom theology. In John he does not so much teach as dispute, and the subject of the dispute is not morals—a field he scarcely ever enters—but his personal pretensions. Upon these he carries on a continual wrangle, supporting his claims by his peculiar views of the divine nature and of his

¹ Jo. vi. 53, 60. ² Jo. vii. 33-36; viii. 21, 22. ³ Jo. xii. 32-36.

relation to it.¹ In the same spirit the blind man whom he cures enters into a discussion with the Pharisees on the character of him who had restored his sight.² The Jews are depicted as continually occupied about this question. Even their own officers receive from them a reproof for making a laudatory remark about him,³ while Nicodemus, who interposes in arrest of judgment, is sharply asked whether he also is of Galilee.⁴

The very best instruction of Jesus is not given, as in the other Gospels, to a multitude, but is reserved for a select circle of his own followers. It is in the 14th, 15th, and 16th chapters that he rises to the sublimest heights of his doctrine, and the whole of this remarkable discourse is delivered to the disciples after Judas has left the supper-table in order to betray him. The substance of his teaching is no less peculiar than its occasions. The writer conceives of him as holding an altogether singular relation to the Father, and that relation he represents his Christ as continually expounding and insisting upon as of vital moment. The Evangelist himself begins his work by a concise statement of his doctrine on this point. The Logos, he says, was with God in the beginning; the Logos was God. All things were made by it, and nothing was made without it. In it was life, and the life was the light of men. This Light came into the world, but the world did not know him. Even his own, whoever these may have been, did not receive him. To those who did receive him, he gave power to become

¹ Jo. v. 16-47; vi. 41-59; vii. 14-36; viii. 12-59; ix. 39-41; x. 19-38.

² Jo. ix. 24-34.

³ Jo. vii. 47, 48.

⁴ Jo. vii. 51, 52.

the sons of God ; and these were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. The Logos was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, as of the only-begotten of the Father.¹

The language of Christ is duly adjusted to this very speculative theory. Thus, he scandalises the Jews by the bold assertion that he and his Father are one ; and adds to their horror by further maintaining that he is in the Father, and the Father in him.² Elsewhere, Philip is required to believe in the same truth. In reply to his ignorant request that he may be shown the Father, he is told that seeing Jesus is equivalent to seeing the Father. Moreover, the Father who dwells in Christ performs the works which are apparently done by Christ alone.³ The disciples, too, are included in this mystic unity, for they are in Jesus in the same sense in which he is in God.⁴ His Father, nevertheless, is greater than himself.⁵ Jesus had been glorified with the Father before the world existed, and looks forward to a return to that glory. He wishes that those who have been given him on earth may be with him to behold the glory which God, who loved him before the foundation of the world, has given him. That glory he has given them, and they are to be one, even as he and his Father are one ; he in them, and God in him.⁶

After these preliminary observations, we need not dwell long on the historical incidents of the Gospel, of which there are but few. The meeting

¹ Jo. i. 1-14.³ Jo. xiv. 9-11.⁵ Jo. xiv. 28.² Jo. x. 30, 38.⁴ Jo. xiv. 20 ; xvii. 21, 23.⁶ Jo. xvii. 5, 22-24.

of Jesus with Andrew and Simon, and his reception of Nathanael, related in the first chapter, have already been noticed. It only remains to be said, that Nathanael was deceived by a prophecy which was not fulfilled ; for at the end of the interview, Jesus, referring to his amazement that he had been discovered under the fig-tree, which had quite put him off his balance, tells him that he shall see greater things than these, and especially mentions among them the opening of the heavens and the descent of angels upon the Son of man. Nathanael never saw anything of the kind.¹

The conversion of water into wine follows next. A peculiarity in the notions of this writer is evinced by the assertion that his mother and brothers went with him to Capernaum, for his family do not accompany him, according to any other statement ; while here his mother not only is with him, but is aware that he is able to work a miracle.² Jesus, after visiting Capernaum, proceeded for the passover to Jerusalem, where it is said that many believed in him because of his miracles. His expulsion of the money-changers, however, brought him into collision with the authorities of his nation, who asked him for a sign ; a question to which he replied by the undertaking to rebuild the temple, if destroyed, in three days.³ But one of the Jewish rulers, named Nicodemus, was disposed to believe in his pretensions. This man came to him by night, and heard from him a long theological disquisition.⁴ Jesus then went into Judæa, and remained there

¹ Jo. i. 35-51. ² Jo. ii. 1-12. ³ Jo. ii. 13-25. ⁴ Jo. iii. 1-21.

with his disciples baptizing his converts. John the Baptist is made to bear an emphatic testimony to his superiority.¹ A visit to Samaria is the occasion for an interesting dialogue with a Samaritan woman who had come to draw water at a well; and her report leads the inhabitants to come out and see the prophet by whom she had been so much impressed.

This incident is reproduced with curious fidelity in Buddhist story. Ananda, one of Sakyamuni's disciples, met with a Matangi woman, one of a degraded caste, who was drawing water, and asked her to give him some of it to drink. Just as the Samaritan wondered that Jesus, a Jew, should ask drink of her, one of a nation with whom the Jews had no dealings, so this young Matangi girl warned Ananda of her caste, which rendered it unlawful for her to approach a monk. And as Jesus nevertheless continued to converse with the woman, so Ananda did not shrink from this out-cast damsel. "I do not ask thee, my sister," he replied, "either thy caste or thy family; I only ask thee for water, if thou canst give me some." The Buddha himself, to whom the Matangi girl afterwards presented herself, treated her with equal kindness. He contrived to divert the profane love she had conceived for Ananda into a holy love of religion; much as Jesus led the Samaritan from the thought of her five husbands, and of him who was not her husband, to the conception of the universal Father who was to be worshipped "in spirit and in truth." And as the disciples "marvelled" that Jesus should have conversed with this member of a despised race, so the respectable

¹ Jo. iii. 22-36.

Brahmans and householders who adhered to Buddhism were scandalised to learn that the young Matangi had been admitted to the order of mendicants.¹

After two days spent at Samaria Jesus went on to Galilee, where he healed the nobleman's son.² Having returned to Jerusalem for another feast, he cured the impotent man on the Sabbath, which endangered his life at the hands of the indignant Jews, and led him to deliver a long vindication.³ The feeding of the five thousand was followed by an attempt to make him king, from which he prudently escaped. The disciples took ship to go to Capernaum, and Jesus joined them by walking on the water. On the ensuing day he preached to the people who followed him, and shocked even some of the disciples by the loftiness of the claims he advanced. Many of them are said to have left him at this time.⁴

A singular proceeding is now mentioned. Urged by his brothers, who were still incredulous, to go to Jerusalem for the feast of tabernacles, he declined on the ground that his time was not yet come. When they were gone he himself went also, though secretly.⁵ There is no reason assigned for this little stratagem, and he soon emerged from his incognito and taught openly in the temple. The public mind was much divided about his character, some maintaining him to be Christ, others contending that Christ could only come from the seed of David and the town of Bethlehem. An attempt to arrest him failed, owing to the impression he made upon the police.⁶ A discussion with the Jews was terminated by their taking up

¹ Jo. iv. 1-42 ; H. B. L., pp. 205, 206.

² Jo. iv. 43-54.

³ Jo. v.

⁴ Jo. vi.

⁵ Jo. vii. 1-10.

⁶ Jo. vii. 11-53.

stones to throw at him, a peril from which he escaped apparently by miracle.¹ Further offence was given by the restoration of a blind man's sight on the Sabbath.² A discourse on his title to authority provoked divisions, and at the feast of the dedication he was plainly asked whether he was the Christ. His answer again led to an attempt to stone him, from which he escaped to the place beyond Jordan where John had formerly baptized.³ The raising of Lazarus and the anointing by Mary are the next events recorded.⁴ The passover followed six days after the latter incident, and his preaching at this festival was interrupted in a singular manner. Jesus had used the words, "Father, glorify thy name," whereupon a voice was heard from heaven, saying, "I both have glorified it, and will glorify it again." Thereupon Jesus observed that this voice came not for his sake, but for that of the bystanders. It seems, however, to have produced but little effect upon them, for a few verses later we find a complaint that, in spite of his many miracles, they did not believe on him.⁵ The last supper with the disciples was immediately succeeded by a parting discourse of much beauty, conceived in an elevated tone; and his last moments of freedom were occupied in a prayer of which the pathos has been rarely equalled.⁶

The remainder of his career—his trial, execution, and alleged resurrection—have been fully treated in another place.

¹ Jo. viii. 12-59; verses 1-11 are spurious.

² Jo. ix.

³ Jo. x.

⁴ Jo. xi. 1-xii. 9.

⁵ Jo. xii. 12-50.

⁶ Jo. xiii.-xvii.

SUBDIVISION 4.—*What did the Jews think of him?*

Victorious over Jesus Christ at the moment, the Jewish nation have, from an early period in Christian history, been subject in their turn to his disciples. Their polity—crushed under the iron heel of Vespasian, scattered to the winds by Hadrian—vanished from existence not long after it had successfully put down the founder of the new faith. Their religion, tolerated by the heathen Romans only under humiliating and galling conditions, persecuted almost to death by the Christians, suffered until modern times an oppression so terrible and so cruel, that but for the deep and unshakeable attachment of its adherents, it could never have survived its perils. Hence the course of events has been such that this unhappy nation has never until quite recently enjoyed the freedom necessary to present their case in the matter of Jesus the son of Joseph ; while the gradual decay of the rancour formerly felt against them, at the same time that it gives them liberty, renders it less important for them to come forward in what would still be an unpopular cause. Thus it happens that one side only in the controversy, that of the Christians, has been adequately heard. They certainly have not shrunk from the presentation of their views. Every epithet that scorn, hatred, or indignation could suggest has been heaped upon the generation of Jews who were the immediate instigators of the execution of Jesus, while all the subsequent miseries of their race have been regarded—by the party which delighted to inflict them—as exhibitions of the divine vengeance

against that one criminal act. Nor have even free-thinkers shrunk from condemning the Jews as guilty of gross and unpardonable persecution, and that towards one who, if they do not think him a God, nevertheless appears to them singularly free from blame. On the one side, according to the prevailing conception, stands the innocent victim ; on the other the bloodthirsty Jewish people. All good is with the one ; all evil with the other. It is supposed that only their hard-heartedness, their aversion to the pure doctrine of the Redeemer, their determination to shut their eyes to the light and their ears to the words of truth, could have led them to the commission of so great a crime.

Whether or not this theory be true, it at least suffers from the vice of having been adopted without due examination. An opinion can rest on no solid basis unless its opposite has been duly supported by competent defenders. Now in the present instance this has not happened. Owing to the causes mentioned above, the Christian view has been practically uncontested, and writer after writer has taken it up and repeated it in the unreflecting way in which we all of us repeat assertions about which there is no dispute. Yet a very little consideration will show that so simple an explanation of the transaction has at least no *à priori* probability in its favour. That a whole nation should be completely in the wrong, and a few individuals only in the right, is a supposition which can be accepted only on the most convincing evidence. And in order even to justify our entertaining it for a moment, we must be in possession of a report of the circumstances

of the case from the advocates of the nation, as well as from the advocates of the individuals who suffered by its action. A one-sided statement from the partisans of a convicted person can never be sufficient to enable us to pronounce a conclusive verdict against his judges. The most ordinary rules of fairness prohibit this. Yet this is what is commonly done. No account whatever of the trial of Jesus has reached us from the side of the prosecution. Josephus, who might have enlightened us, is silent. On the other hand, the side of the defence has furnished us with its own version of what passed, and from the imperfect materials thus supplied we must endeavour to discriminate between the two as best we can. To do this justly, we must bear in mind, that even though the charges produced against Jesus should not appear to justify the indignation of his accusers, it is at least unlikely that that indignation was altogether without reasonable cause. And painful as it may be to be compelled to think that Jesus was in the wrong, it would surely—had not long habit perverted our natural sentiments—be quite as painful to believe that a large multitude of men, impelled by mere malignity against a virtuous citizen, had conspired to put him to death on charges which were absolutely groundless. The honour of an heroic, and above all, of a deeply religious people, is here at stake. It is no light matter to deal in wholesale accusations of judicial murder against them. It would surely be a happier solution if it could be shown that the individual condemned was not absolutely guiltless. But possibly we may be able to elude either alternative. Just as, according

to the able reasoning of Grote, the upright character of Sokrates may be compatible with a sense of justice on the part of the Athenians who condemned him to death, so it is conceivable that the innocence of Jesus may consist with the fact that the Jews who caused him to be crucified were not altogether without excuse.

An examination of this question must be conducted with a careful regard to the hereditary feelings of orthodox Hebrews in matters of religion; with an attention to the conceptions they had formed of holiness, and consequently of blasphemy, its negation; with a desire to do justice if possible to the very prejudices that clouded their vision, and to realise the intensity of the sentiment that ruled their national life and bound them to uphold their law in all its severe integrity. We must remember that the Jews were above all things monotheists. Ever since, after the captivity, they had put away every remnant of idolatry, they had clung to the unity and majesty of Jehovah with a stern tenacity which no alluring temptations, no extremity of suffering, had been able to break. If they were now ready to persecute for this faith, they had at least shown themselves able—they soon showed themselves able again—to bear persecution for its sake. Their law, with its monotheistic dogmas and its practical injunctions, was to them supremely holy. Any attempt to infringe its precepts, or to question its authority, excited their utmost horror. To set up any other object of worship than that which it recognised, to teach any other faith than that which rested on this foundation, was blasphemy in their eyes. The happiness, nay, the very existence, of the nation was bound up with

its strict observance. This may have been a delusion, but it was one for which the existing generation was not responsible. It had been handed down from their ancestors, and had reached them with all the sanctity of venerable age. If it were a delusion, it was one which the compilers of the Pentateuch; which Josiah, with his reforming measures; which Ezra, with his purifying zeal; which the prophets and priests of olden times who had fought and laboured for the religion of Jehovah, had mainly fostered. They had succeeded but too well in impressing upon the mind of the nation the profound conviction that, in order to ensure the favour of God, they must maintain every iota of the revealed truth they had received, and that his anger would surely follow if they suffered it to be in the smallest degree corrupted or treated with neglect.

Nevertheless the utmost efforts of the people to guard the purity of the faith had been rewarded hitherto with little but misery. Their exemption from troubles did not last long after the rebuilding of the temple. A prey now to the Seleucidæ, now to the Ptolemies, their native land the scene of incessant warfare, they enjoyed under the Asmonean kings but a brief period of independence and good government. Their polity received a rude shock from the capture of Jerusalem by Pompey; maintained but a shadow of freedom under the cruel tyranny of Herod; and fell at last—some time before the public appearance of Christ—under the direct administration of the unsympathetic Romans. A more intolerable fate could hardly be imagined. The Romans had no tenderness for their feelings, no commiseration for their scruples,

no comprehension of their peculiar practices. Hence constant collision between the governors and the governed. It is needless to enter in detail upon the miserable struggles between those who were strong in material force and those who were strong in the force of conscience. Suffice it to say, that provocation on provocation was inflicted on the Jews, until at length the inevitable rebellion came, to be terminated by the not less inevitable suppression with its attendant cruelties. But in the time of Jesus the crisis had not yet come. All things were in a state of the utmost tension. It was of the highest importance to the people, and their authorities were well aware of it, that there should be nothing done that could excite the anger of their rulers. The Romans knew, of course, that no loyalty was felt towards them in Palestine. And the least indication of resistance was enough to provoke them to the severest measures. All that remained of independence to the Jews—the freedom to worship in their own way; their national unity; their possession of the temple; their very lives—depended on their success in conciliating the favour of the procurator who happened to be set over them. The assertion by any one of rights that might appear to clash with those of Rome, even the foolish desire of the populace to honour some one who did not pretend to them, were fraught with the utmost danger. It was necessary for the rulers to prove that they did not countenance the least indication of a wish to set up a rival power.

Their task was the more difficult because the people were continually looking for some great national hero who should redeem them from their subjection. The

conception of the "Messiah," the Anointed One, the King or High Priest who should restore, and much more than restore, the ancient glory of their nation, who should lead them to victory over their enemies and then reign over them in peace, was ineradicably imbedded in their minds. Consequently they were only too ready—especially in these days of overstrung nerves and feverish agitation under a hateful rule—to welcome any one who held out the chance of deliverance. The risk was not imaginary. Prophets and Messiahs, if they were not successful, could do nothing but harm. Theudas, a leader who did not even claim Messiahship, had involved his followers in destruction. Bar-cohab, who at a later time was received by many as the Messiah, brought upon his countrymen not only enormous slaughter, but even the crowning misfortune of expulsion from Jerusalem. Now, although the high priests and elders no doubt shared the popular expectation of a Messiah, they were bound as prudent men to test the pretensions of those who put themselves forward in that character, and if they were imperilling the public peace, to put a stop to their careers. It was not for them, the appointed guides of the people, to be carried away by every breath of popular enthusiasm. They would have been wholly unworthy of their position had they permitted floating reports of miracles and marvels, or the applauding clamour of admirers, to impose upon their judgment. Calmly, and after examination of the facts, it was their duty to decide.

Jesus had professed to be the Messiah. So much is undisputed. Could his title be admitted? Now, in the first place, it was the central conception of the

Messianic office that its holder should exercise temporal power. He was not expected to be a teacher of religious doctrines, for this was not what was required. The code of theological truth was, so far as the Jews were aware, completed. The Revelation they possessed never hinted, from beginning to end, that it was imperfect in any of its parts, or that it needed a supplementary Revelation to fill up the void which it contained. Whatever Christians, instructed by the gospel, may have thought in subsequent ages, the believers in the Hebrew Bible neither had ascertained, nor possibly could ascertain, that Jehovah intended to send his Son on earth to enlighten them on questions appertaining to their religious belief. This they thought had long been settled, and he who tried either to take anything from it or add anything to it was in their eyes an impious criminal. Such persons, they knew, had been sternly dealt with in the palmy days of the Hebrew state, and the example of their most honoured prophets and their most pious kings would justify the severest measures that could be taken against them. A spiritual reformer, then, was not what they needed: a temporal leader was. And this they had a perfect right to expect that the Messiah would be. The very word itself—the Anointed One, a word commonly applied to the king—indicates the possession of the powers of government.¹ Their prophecies all pointed to this conception

¹ The word מָשִׁיחַ, translated into Messiah, is of common occurrence in the Old Testament. It is occasionally used of the Hebrew people, with the intention of emphasising the fact of their being, as it were, a royal or privileged people, superior to all other nations. In nearly all cases it is the king of Israel who is described as the Anointed; David frequently bearing this title, and Kyros being, I believe, the only

of the Messiah. Their popular traditions all confirmed it. Their political necessities all encouraged it. The very disciples themselves held it like the rest of their nation, for when they meet Jesus after his resurrection we find them inquiring, "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?"¹ The conversation may be imaginary, but the state of mind which such a question indicates was doubtless real. The author represented them as speaking as he knew that they had felt. Now, if even they, who had enjoyed the intimate friendship of Jesus, could still look to him as one who would restore to Israel something of her bygone grandeur, was it to be expected that the less privileged Jews, who had inherited from their forefathers a fixed belief in this temporal restoration, should suddenly surrender it at the bidding of Jesus of Nazareth? For he at least did not realise the prevailing notions of what the Messiah ought to be. For temporal sovereignty he was clearly unfit, nor does he seem to have ever demanded it. There was a danger no doubt that his enthusiastic followers might thrust it upon him, and that, thus urged, he might be tempted to accept it. But his general character precluded the supposition that he could ever be fit to stand at the head of a national movement. The absence, moreover, of all political enthusiasm from his

pagan monarch to whom it is given. This occurs in the well-known exhortation (Isaiah xlv. 1), "Thus saith the Lord to his Messiah Kyros," &c. The verb מָשַׁח, with which it is connected, signifies to anoint, with the special sense of conferring a peculiar holiness on the anointed object. Unction was applied to the kings, the high priests, the altar, the tabernacle, the sacred vessels, and other objects used in divine worship. It conveyed, therefore, a consecration both to things and persons, and with persons it was also the symbol of a divinely-given power.

¹ Acts i. 6.

teaching proved him not to be the Saviour for whom they were looking. His assertions that he was the Son of God, though they might provoke sedition and endanger the security of his countrymen, could bring them no corresponding good.

Christians have maintained that the Jews were entirely wrong in their conception of the Messiah's character, and that Jesus by his admirable life brought a higher and more excellent ideal than theirs into the world. They admire him for not laying claim to temporal dominion, and laud his humility, his meekness, his submissiveness, the patience with which he bore his sufferings, and the whole catalogue of similar virtues. It was, according to them, the mere blindness of the Jews that prevented them from recognising in him a far greater Messiah than they had erroneously expected. Moreover, they tell us that another of the mistakes made by this gross nation was the expectation of an earthly kingdom in which Christ was to reign, whereas it was only a spiritual kingdom which he came to institute. But who were to be judges of the character of the Messiah if not the Jews to whom he was to come? The very thought of a Messiah was peculiarly their own. It had grown up in the course of their national history, and was embodied in their national prophecies. They alone were its authorised interpreters; they alone could say whether it was fulfilled in the case of a given individual. It is surely a piece of the most amazing presumption on the part of nations of heathen origin to pretend that they are more competent than the Jews themselves to understand the meaning of a Jewish term; a term, moreover, which neither had nor could have before the time of Jesus

any sense at all except that which the Jews themselves attached to it. Christians, who derive not only their idea of the Messiah's character, but their very knowledge of the word, from the case of Jesus alone, undertake to set right the Jews, among whom it was a current notion for centuries before he had been conceived in his mother's womb!

Granting, however, that this difficulty might have been surmounted, supposing that it was a spiritual kingdom which the ancient prophets under uncouth images referred to, the question still remains whether Jesus in other respects fulfilled the conditions demanded by Scripture. For this purpose it will be the fairest method to confine ourselves to the discussion of those prophecies alone which are quoted by the Evangelists, and are therefore relied upon by them as proving their case. Where, however, they have quoted only a portion of a prophecy, and the remainder gives a somewhat different complexion to the passage extracted, justice to their opponents requires that we should consider the whole.

Take first the circumstances of Christ's birth. It was expected that the Messiah was to be of the family of David, and born at Bethlehem Ephrathah. Now, according to two of our authorities, he fulfilled both of these conditions. But, without at all discussing the point whether their statement is true, it is abundantly sufficient for the vindication of the Jews to observe, that they neither knew, nor could know, anything at all, either of his royal lineage or of his birth at Bethlehem. For he himself never stated either of the two capital facts of which Luke and Matthew make so much, nor does it appear that any

of his disciples alluded to them during his lifetime. He was habitually spoken about as Jesus of Nazareth. Matthew, in endeavouring to account for the name by misquoting a prophecy, bears witness to the fact that it expressed the general belief. Luke makes him speak of Nazareth as his own country. Nowhere does it appear that he repudiated the implication conveyed by his ordinary title. Still less did he ever maintain—what his over-busy biographers maintained for him—that he was of the seed of David. Quite the reverse. He contends against the Pharisees that the Messiah was not to be a descendant of David at all. The dialogue as given by Matthew runs thus: “ ‘What is your opinion about the Christ? whose son is he?’ They say to him, ‘David’s.’ He says to them, ‘How then does David in the spirit call him lord, saying, The Lord said to my lord, Sit on my right hand until I place thine enemies under thy feet? If then David calls him lord, how is he his son?’ ”¹ No answer was given by the Pharisees, nor was any explanation of the paradox ever granted them by Jesus. In the absence, then, of any further elucidation we can only put one interpretation upon his argument. It was clearly intended to show, not only that the Messiah *need* not, but that he *could* not be of the house of David. David in that case would not have called him Lord. The Pharisees may have been but little impressed by the force of the argument, but of one thing they could scarcely entertain a doubt. Jesus wished it to be thought that he was the Messiah. He also wished it to be thought that the Messiah was not a son of David. He himself therefore was certainly not a son of David. But if any-

¹ Mt. xxii. 42-45.

thing more were needed to excuse the ignorance—supposing it such—of the Jewish rulers about the birthplace and family of Jesus, we find it even superabundantly in the work of one of his own adherents—the fourth Evangelist. Not that this writer is to be taken as an authority on the facts, but he is an authority on the views that were current, at least in a portion of his own sect, and on that which he himself—writing long after the death of Christ—had received by tradition. Now, in the beginning of his Gospel he describes Philip the disciple as going to Nathanael, and saying, “We have found him of whom Moses in the law and of whom the prophets wrote, Jesus *the son of Joseph from Nazareth.*” At this Nathanael sceptically asks, “Can anything good come from Nazareth?” and Philip replies, “Come and see.”¹ According to this account, then, the very disciples of Jesus believed in his Nazarene nativity, as also (by the way) in his generation by a human father. Nor is this all the evidence. In another chapter an active discussion is represented as going on among the Jews as to whether Jesus was the Christ or not. Opinions differed. Foremost among the arguments for the negative, however, was the appeal to the Scriptural declaration that the Christ must be of David’s seed, and emanate from the village of Bethlehem.² No answer to this was forthcoming from the partisans of Jesus, nor is any suggested by the Evangelist. There is but one rational inference to be drawn from his silence. He either had not heard, or he purposely ignored, the story of Christ’s birth at Bethlehem, and the genealogies which connected him with David.

¹ Jo. i. 45, 46.

² Jo. vii. 42.

His mind (if he had ever been a Jew) was to no small extent emancipated from Jewish limitations, and with his highly refined views of the Logos, he did not believe in the necessity of these material conditions. It was nothing to him that they were not fulfilled. More orthodox believers in the prophecies of the Old Testament may be pardoned if they could not so lightly put them aside. But what shall be said of the conduct of Jesus? If he really were a descendant of David, born at Bethlehem, and wrongly taken for a Nazarene, can we acquit him of an inexcusable fraud upon the Jews in not bringing these facts under their notice? Assuredly not. If, knowing as he did the weight they would have in the public mind, he kept them back; knowing that they would overcome some of the gravest objections that were taken against his claim, he did not urge them in reply; knowing at the close of his life that he was charged with an undue assumption of authority, he did not produce them as at least a portion of his credentials,—he played a part which it would be difficult to stigmatise as severely as it deserves. He believed that his reception by his nation would be an immense benefit to themselves, yet he did not speak the word which might have helped them to receive him. He thought he had a mission from God, yet he failed to use one potent argument in favour of the truth of that idea. He saw finally that he was condemned to death for supposed impiety, yet he suffered the Sanhedrim to incur the guilt of his condemnation without employing one of his strongest weapons in his defence. Happily, we are not obliged to suspect him of this iniquity. The contradictory stories by which his royal descent and

his birth at Bethlehem are sought to be established sufficiently betray their origin to permit us to believe in the honour and honesty of Jesus.

Another Messianic prophecy which he is supposed to have fulfilled is that of birth from a virgin, the necessity of which was deduced from an expression of Isaiah's. That the writer of the fourth Gospel was ignorant of this virgin-birth we have already shown, and that the Jewish people in general took him to be the son of Joseph is obvious enough from their allusions to his father.¹ Here again he never contradicted the prevalent assumption. But even had they known of the miraculous conception, the Jews might have denied that the passage from Isaiah bore any such construction as that put upon it by Matthew. He renders it: "Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a son."² But a more proper translation would be: "The maiden shall conceive, and bear a son," for the word translated *virgin* by Matthew does not exclude young women who have lost their virginity. Nay, it curiously enough happens to be used elsewhere of maidens engaged in the very conduct by which they would certainly be deprived of it.³

Moreover, the two prophecies quoted by Matthew,

¹ Mk. vi. 3 ; Mt. xiii. 55, 56 ; Lu. iv. 22 ; Jo. vi. 42.

² Mt. i. 23.

³ The word עַלְמָה, improperly rendered *παρθενος* in the LXX, means, according to Fürst's Hebrew Lexicon, "a marriageable, ripe maiden, either unmarried, Gen. xxiv. 43 ; Ex. ii. 8 ; Song of Sol. vi. 8, . . . or in sexual intercourse with a man, Prov. xxx. 19."—Fürst, *sub voce*. The correct translation of this passage was given as early as the second century by Theodotion and Aquila, whom Irenæus refutes by the aid of a fabulous story to the effect that the seventy translators of the Old Testament each did his work separately, and that their seventy versions, when presented to Ptolemy, were found to be

which were, no doubt, familiar to the Jews, could by no possibility be applied by them to a person of the character of Jesus. Even the small fragments torn away from their context by the Evangelist convict him of a misapplication. In the first fragment, the Virgin's son is called Immanuel, a name which Jesus never bore.¹ In the second, he is described as "a ruler, who shall govern my people Israel," which Jesus never was.² But the unlikeness of the predicted person to Jesus is still further shown by comparing the circumstances as conceived by the prophet with the actual circumstances of the time. Immanuel's birth is to be followed, while he is still too young to choose between good and evil, by a terrible desolation of the land. Hosts, described as flies and bees, are to come from Egypt and Assyria, and camp in the valleys, the clefts of the rocks, the hedges and meadows. Cultivable land will produce only thorns and thistles. Cultivated hills will be surrendered to cattle from fear of thorns and thistles.³ Nothing of all this happened in the time of Jesus. But the prophecy of Micah is still more inappropriate. The "ruler" who is to be born in Bethlehem is to lead Israel to victory over all her enemies. He is to deliver his people from the Assyrian. The remnant of Jacob is to be among the heathen, like a lion among the beasts of the forest, like a young lion among flocks of sheep. Its hand is to be lifted up against its adversaries, and all its enemies are to be destroyed.⁴

These references to prophecy were certainly not word for word the same. Thus, "even the Gentiles present perceived that the Scriptures had been interpreted by the inspiration of God."—*Irenæus adv. Hær. iii. 21.*

¹ Mt. i. 23.² Mt. ii. 6.³ Isa. vii. 14-25.⁴ Micah v.

happy. An allusion by Matthew to the words, "The people who walk in darkness see a great light," is not much more to the purpose, for Isaiah in the passage in question proceeds to describe the child who is to bring them this happiness as one who shall have the government upon his shoulder, who is to be on the throne of David, to establish and maintain it by right and justice for ever.¹ Another extract from Isaiah, beginning, "Behold my servant whom I have chosen," and depicting a gentler character, is more appropriate, but is too vague to be easily confined to any one individual.

Jesus himself is reported by one of his biographers to have relied on certain words from the pseudo-Isaiah as a confirmation of his mission. If the account be true, the circumstance is of great importance as showing the view he himself took of his office, and the means he employed to convince the Jews of his right to hold it. Entering the synagogue at Nazareth, he received the roll of the prophet Isaiah, and proceeded to read from the sixty-first chapter as follows:—"The Spirit of the Lord Jehovah is upon me, because Jehovah has anointed me to announce glad tidings to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the broken-hearted; to cry to the captives, Freedom, and to those in fetters, Deliverance; to cry out a year of goodwill from Jehovah." Here Jesus broke off the reading in the middle of a verse, and declared that this day this scripture was fulfilled.² But let us continue our study of the prophetic vision a little further. "To cry out a year of goodwill from Jehovah, and a *day of vengeance from our God*; to comfort all that

¹ Mt. iv. 15, 16; Is. ix. 1-7.

² Lu. iv. 16-21.

mourn ; to appoint for the mourners of Zion,—to give them ornament for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, a garment of praise for a desponding spirit ; that they may be called oaks of righteousness, a plantation of Jehovah to glorify himself. And they will build up the ruins of old times, they will restore the desolations of former days ; and they will renew desolate cities, the ruins of generation upon generation. And strangers shall stand and feed your flocks, and the sons of foreigners shall be your husbandmen and your vinedressers. And you shall be called ‘Priests of Jehovah ;’ ‘Servants of our God,’ shall be said to you ; the riches of the Gentiles you shall eat, and into their splendour you shall enter.”¹ Had Jesus concluded the passage he had begun, he could scarcely have said, “This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.” The contrast between the prediction and the fact would have been rather too glaring.

Perhaps the most striking apparent similarity to Jesus is found in the man described in such beautiful language by an unknown prophet in the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah. But these words could hardly be applied to him by the Jews ; in the first place, because they would not be construed to refer to him until after his crucifixion, seeing that they describe oppression, prison, judgment, and execution ; in the second place, because there was no reason to believe that he bore their diseases, and took their sorrows upon him. And although the familiar words—doubly familiar from the glorious music of Handel,—“He was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief,” may seem to us, who know his end, to describe him perfectly, they

¹ Is. lxi. 1-6.

could hardly describe him to the Jews, who saw him in his daily life. In that, at least, there was nothing peculiarly unhappy.

Failing the prophecies, which were plainly two-edged swords, Jesus could appeal to his remarkable miracles. He and his disciples evidently thought them demonstrations of a divine commission. But, in the first place, it is clear that the evidence of the most wonderful of these consisted only of the rumours circulating among ignorant peasants, which the more instructed portion of the nation very properly disregarded. Their demand for a sign¹ proves that they were not satisfied by these popular reports, if they had ever heard them. And in the second place, those miracles which were better attested were not convincing from the fact that others could perform them. Jesus, charged with casting out devils by Baäl-zebub, the prince of devils, adroitly retorted on the Pharisees by asking, if that were so, by whom their sons cast them out?² But thus he admitted that he was not singular in his profession. Miracles, in short, were not regarded by the Jews as any proof of Messiahship. Their own prophets had performed them. Their own disciples now performed them. Others might possibly perform them by diabolic agency. The Egyptian magicians had been very clever in their contest with Moses, though Moses had beaten them, and had performed far more amazing wonders than those of Jesus, in so far as these latter were known to the Pharisees.

Miracles being too common to confer any peculiar title to reverence on the thaumaturgist, there remained

¹ Mt. xii. 38.

² Mk. iii. 22 ; Mt. xii. 24-30 ; Lu. xi. 14-24.

the doctrine and personal character of Jesus by which to judge him. It must be borne in mind that the impression which these might make upon his antagonists would depend mainly upon his bearing in his relations with them. He might preach pure morals in Galilee, or present a model of excellence to his own followers in Judæa ; but this would not entitle him to reception as the Messiah, nor would it remove an unfavourable bias created by his conduct towards those who had not embraced his principles. Let us see, then, what was likely to be the effect on the Pharisees, scribes, and others, of those elements in his opinions and his behaviour by which they were more immediately affected.

There existed among the Jews, as there still exists among ourselves, an institution which was greatly honoured among them, as it is still honoured, though in a minor degree, among ourselves. The institution was that of a day of rest sacred to God once in every seven days. This custom they believed to have been founded by the very highest authority, and embodied by Moses in the ten commandments which he received on Sinai. Nothing in the eyes of an orthodox Jew could be holier than such an observance, enjoined by his God, founded by the greatest legislator of his race, consecrated by long tradition. Now the ordinary rules with regard to what was lawful and what unlawful on this day were totally disregarded by Jesus. Not only did his disciples make a path through a cornfield on the Sabbath, but Jesus openly cured diseases, that is, pursued his common occupation, on this most sacred festival.¹ When these

¹ Mk. ii. 23—iii. 7 : Mt. xii. 1–14 ; Lu. vi. 1–11, xiii. 10–17, xiv. 1–6.

violations of propriety (as they seemed to them) first came under the notice of the Pharisees, they merely remonstrated with Jesus, and endeavoured to induce him to restrain the impiety of his disciples. Not only did he decline to do so, but he expressly justified their course by the example of David, and by that of the priests, who, according to his mode of reasoning, profane the Sabbath in the temple by doing that to which by their office they were legally bound. Such an argument could scarcely convince the Pharisees, but they must have been shocked beyond measure when he proclaimed himself greater than the temple, and asserted his lordship even over the Sabbath-day. They then inquired of him—a perfectly legitimate question—whether it was lawful to heal on the Sabbath, to which he replied that if one of their own sheep had fallen into the pit they would pick it out. Confirming his theory by his practice, he at once healed a man with a withered hand. It is noteworthy that the desire of the Pharisees to inflict punishment upon Jesus is dated by all three Evangelists from this incident; so that the hostility towards him may be certainly considered as largely due to his unsabbatarian principles.

Now in this question it is almost needless for me to say that my sympathies are entirely with Jesus. Although I do not perceive in his conduct any extensive design against the Sabbath altogether, yet it is much that he should have attempted to mitigate its rigour. For that the world owes him its thanks. But surely it cannot be difficult, in this highly sabbatarian country, to understand the horror of the Pharisees at

his apparent levity. Seeing that it is not so very long since the supposed desecration of the Sunday in these islands subjected the offender to be treated as a common criminal; seeing that even now a total abstinence from labour on that day is in many occupations enforced by law; seeing that a custom almost as strong as law forbids indulgence in a vast number of ordinary amusements during its course, —we can scarcely be much surprised that the sabbatarians of Judæa were zealous to preserve the sanctity of their weekly rest. The fact that highly conscientious and honourable persons entertain similar sentiments about the Sunday is familiar to all. We know that any one who neglected the usual customs; who, for example, played a game at cricket, or danced, or even pursued his commercial avocations on Sunday, would be visited by them with perfectly genuine reproaches. Yet this was exactly the sort of way in which Christ and his disciples shocked the Jews. To make a path through a cornfield and pluck the ears was just one of those little things which the current morality of the Sabbath condemned, much as ours condemns the opening of museums or theatrical entertainments. Their piety was scandalised at such a glaring contempt of the divine ordinances. Nor was the reasoning of Jesus likely to conciliate them. To ask whether it was lawful to do good or evil, to save life or to kill on the Sabbath-day was nothing to the purpose. The question was what *was* good or evil on that particular day, when things otherwise good were by all admitted to be evil. Nor were the cures effected by Jesus necessary to save life. All his patients might well

have waited till evening, when the Sabbath was over. One of them, for instance, a woman who had suffered from a "spirit of weakness" eighteen years, being unable to hold herself erect, was surely not in such urgent need of attendance that a few hours more of her disease would have done her serious harm. Jesus, with his principles, was of course perfectly right to relieve her at once, but it is not to be wondered at that the ruler of the synagogue was indignant, and told the people that there were six working days; in them therefore they should come and be healed, and not on the Sabbath. The epithet of "hypocrite," applied to him by Jesus, was, to say the least, hardly justified.¹

Another habit of Jesus, in itself commendable, excited the displeasure of the stricter sects. It was that of eating with publicans and sinners. This practice, and the fact of his neglecting the fasts observed by the Pharisees, gave an impression of general laxity about his conduct, which, however unjust, was perfectly natural.² Here again I see no reason to attribute bad motives to his opponents, who merely felt as "church-going" people among ourselves would feel about one who stayed away from divine service, and as highly decorous people would feel about one who kept what they thought low company.

Eating with unwashed hands was another of the several evidences of his contempt for the prevalent proprieties of life which gave offence. The resentment felt by the Pharisees at this practice was the more excusable that Jesus justified it on the distinct ground

¹ Lu. xiii. 10-17.

² Mk. ii. 15-22; Mt. ix. 10-17; Lu. v. 29-39.

that he had no respect for "the tradition of the elders," for which they entertained the utmost reverence. This tradition he unsparingly attacked, accusing them of frustrating the commandment of God in order to keep it.¹ Language like this was not likely to pass without leaving a deep-seated wound, especially if it be true (as stated by Luke) that one of the occasions on which he employed it was when invited to dinner by a Pharisee. Indifferent as the washing of hands might be in itself, courtesy towards his host required him to abstain from needless outrage to his feelings. And when, in addition to the first offence, he proceeded to denounce his host and his host's friends as people who made the outside of the cup and the platter clean, but were inwardly full of ravening and wickedness, there is an apparent rudeness which even the truth of his statements could not have excused.²

Neither was the manner in which he answered the questions addressed to him, as to a teacher claiming to instruct the people, likely to remove the prejudice thus created. The Evangelists who report these questions generally relate that they were put with an evil intent: "tempting him," or some such expression being used. But whatever may have been the secret motives of the questioners, nothing could be more legitimate than to interrogate a man who put forward the enormous pretensions of Jesus, so long as the process was conducted fairly. And this, on the side of the Jews, it apparently was. There is nowhere perceptible in their inquiries a

¹ Mk. vii. 1-13; Mt. xv. 1-9.

² Lu. xi. 37-39.

scheme to entrap him, or a desire to entangle him in difficulties by skilful examination. On the contrary, the subjects on which he is questioned are precisely those on which, as the would-be master of the nation, he might most properly be expected to give clear answers. And the judgment formed of him by the public would naturally depend to a large extent on the mode in which he acquitted himself in this impromptu trial. Let us see, then, what was the impression he probably produced.

On one occasion the Pharisees came to him, "tempting him," to ascertain his opinion on divorce. Might a man put away his wife? Jesus replied that he might not, and explained the permission of Moses to give a wife a bill of divorce as a mere concession to the hardness of their hearts. A divorced man or woman who married again was guilty of adultery. Even the disciples were staggered at this. If an unhappy man could never be released from his wife, it would be better, they thought, not to marry at all.¹ Much more must the Pharisees have dissented from this novel doctrine. Rightly or wrongly, they revered the law of Moses, and they could not but profoundly disapprove this assumption of authority to set it aside and substitute for its precepts an unheard-of innovation.

Another question of considerable importance was that relating to the tribute. Some of the Pharisees, it seems, after praising him for his independence, begged him to give them his opinion on a disputed point: Was it lawful or not to pay tribute

¹ Mk. x. 1-12; Mt. xix. 1-12.

to the Emperor? All three biographers are indignant at the question. They attribute it as usual to a desire to "catch him in his words," or, as another Evangelist puts it, to "entangle him in his talk." Jesus (they remark) perceived what one calls their "wickedness," a second their "hypocrisy," and the third their "craftiness." "Why do you tempt me?" he began. "Bring me a denarium that I may see it." The coin being brought, he asked them, "Whose image and superscription is this?" "Cæsar's." "Then render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's."¹ One of the Evangelists, reporting this reply, rejoices at the discomfiture of the Pharisees, who "could not take hold of his words before the people." Doubtless his decision had the merit that it could not be taken hold of, but this was only because it decided nothing. Taking the words in their simplest sense, they merely assert what nobody would deny. No Pharisee would ever have maintained that the things of Cæsar should be given to God; and no partisan of Rome would ever have demanded that the things of God should be given to Cæsar. But practically it is evident that Jesus meant to do more than employ an unmeaning form of words. He meant to assert that the tribute was one of the things of Cæsar, and that because the coin in which it was paid was stamped with his image. More fallacious reasoning could hardly be imagined, and it is not surprising that the Pharisees "marvelled at him." Nobody doubted that the Emperor possessed

¹ Mk. xii. 13-17; Mt. xxii. 15-22; Lu. xx. 20-26.

the material power, and no more than this was proved by the fact that coins bearing his effigy were current in the country. The question was not whether he actually ruled Judæa, but whether it was lawful to acknowledge that rule by paying tribute. And what light could it throw on this question to show that the money used to pay it was issued from his mint? It must almost be supposed that Jesus fell into the confusion of supposing that the denarium with Cæsar's image and superscription upon it was in some peculiar sense Cæsar's property, whereas it belonged as completely to the man who produced it at the moment as did the clothes he wore. Had the Roman domination come to an end at any moment, the coin of the Empire would have retained its intrinsic value, but the Romans could by no possibility have founded a right of exacting tribute upon the circumstance of its circulation. Either, therefore, this celebrated declaration was a mere verbal juggle, or it rested on a transparent fallacy.

After the Pharisees had been thus disposed of, their inquiries were followed up by a puzzle devised by the Sadducees in order to throw ridicule on the doctrine of a future state. These sectaries put an imaginary case. Moses had enjoined that if a man died leaving a childless widow, his brother should marry her for the purpose of keeping up the family. Suppose, said they, that the first of seven brothers marries, and dies without issue. The second brother then marries her with the like result; then the third, and so on through all the seven. In the resurrection whose wife will this woman be, for the seven have had her as their wife? To this Jesus replies: first, that his

questioners greatly err, neither knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God ; secondly, that when people rise from death they do not marry, but are like angels ; thirdly, that the resurrection is proved by the fact that God had spoken of himself as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and that he is not the God of the dead, but of the living.¹ Whether the Sadducees were or were not satisfied by this answer we are not told, but it is quite certain that their modern representatives could not accept it. For the inquirers had hit upon one of the real difficulties attending the doctrine of a future life. We are always assured that one of the great consolations of this doctrine is the hope it holds out of meeting again those whom we have loved on earth, and living with them in a kind of communion not wholly unlike that which we have enjoyed here. Earthly relationships, it is assumed, will be prolonged into that happier world. There the parent will find again the child whom he has lost, and the child will rejoin his parent ; there the bereaved husband will be restored to his wife, and the widow will be comforted by the sight of the companion of her wedded years. All this is simple enough. Complications inevitably arise, however, when we endeavour to pick up again in another life the tangled skein of our relations in this. Not only may the feelings with which we look forward to meeting former friends be widely different after many years' separation from what they were at their death ; but even in marriage there may be a preference for a first or a second husband or wife, which may render the thought of meeting the other

¹ Mk. xii. 18-27 ; Mt. xxii. 23-33 ; Lu. xx. 27-40.

positively unpleasant. And if the sentiments of the other should nevertheless be those of undiminished love, the question may well arise, Whose husband is he, or whose wife is she of the two? Are all three to live together? But then, along with the comfort of meeting one whom we love, we have the less agreeable prospect of meeting another whom we have ceased to love. Or will one of the two wives or two husbands be preferred and the other slighted? If so, the last will suffer and not gain by the reunion. Take the present case. Assume that the wife loved only her first husband, but that all the seven were attached to her. Then we may well ask, whose wife will she be of them? Will her affections be divided among the seven, or will they all be given to the first? In the former case, she will be compelled to live in a society for which she has no desire; in the latter, six of her seven husbands will be unable to enjoy the full benefit of her presence. The question is merely evaded by saying that in the resurrection there is neither marriage nor giving in marriage, but that men are like angels. Either there is no consolation in living again, or there must be some kind of repetition of former ties. Still less logical is the argument by which Jesus attempts to prove the reality of a future state against the Sadducees. In syllogistic form it may be thus stated:—

God is not the God of the dead, but of the living. God told Moses in the bush that he was the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Therefore they are not dead, but living.¹

What is the evidence of the major premiss? The

¹ Mk. xii. 18-27; Mt. xxii. 23-33; Lu. xx. 27-40.

moment it is questioned it is seen to be invalid. Nothing could be more natural than that Moses, or any other Hebrew, should speak of his God as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, meaning that those great forefathers of his race had adored and been protected by the same Jchovah in their day, but not therefore that they were still living. The Sadducees must have been weak indeed if such an argument could weigh with them for a moment.

After this a scribe or lawyer drew from Jesus the important declaration that in his opinion the two greatest commandments were that we should love God with the whole heart, soul, mind, and strength; and our neighbours as ourselves.¹ How gratuitous the imputations of ill-will thrown out against those who interrogate Jesus may be, is admirably shown in the present instance. One Gospel (the most trustworthy) asserts that the question about the first commandment was put by a scribe, who thought that Jesus had answered well, and who, moreover, expressed emphatic approval of the reply given to himself. Such (according to this account) was his sympathy with Jesus, that the latter declared that he was not far from the kingdom of God. Mark now the extraordinary colour given to this simple transaction in another Gospel. The Pharisees, we are told, saw that the Sadducees had been silenced, and therefore drew together. Apparently as a result of their consultation (though this is not stated), one of *them* who was a lawyer asked a question, *tempting him*, namely, Which is the great commandment in the law? Diverse, again, from both versions is the narrative of

¹ Mk. xii. 28-34; Mt. xxii. 34-40; Lu. x. 25-37.

a third. In the first place, all connection with the preceding questions is broken off, and without any preliminaries, a lawyer stands up, and, *tempting him*, inquires, "Master, by what conduct shall I inherit eternal life?" To which Jesus replies by a counter-question, "What is written in the law?" and then, strange to say, these two great commandments are enunciated, not by him, but by the unknown lawyer, whose answer receives the commendation of Jesus.

The bias thus evinced by the Evangelists, even in reporting the fairest questions, seems to show that Christ did not like his opinions to be elicited from him by this method, feeling perhaps that it was likely to expose his intellectual weaknesses. In this way, and possibly in others, a sentiment of hostility grew up between himself and the dominant sects, which, until the closing scenes of his career, was far more marked on his side than on theirs. Beautiful maxims about loving one's enemies and returning good for evil did not keep him from reproaching the Pharisees on many occasions. Unfortunately, a man's particular enemies are just those who scarcely ever appear to him worthy of love, and this was evidently the case with Jesus and the men upon whom he poured forth his denunciations. Judging by his mode of speaking, we should suppose that all religious people who did not agree with him were simply hypocrites. This is one of the mildest terms by which he can bring himself to mention the Pharisees or the scribes. Of the latter, he declares that they devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayers; therefore they would receive the

greater damnation.¹ The scribes and the Pharisees, it is said, bind heavy burdens on others, and refuse to touch them themselves (surely an improbable charge). They do all their works to be seen of men (their outward behaviour then was virtuous). One of their grievous sins is that they make their phylacteries broad, and enlarge the borders of their garments. Worse still: they like the best places at dinner-parties and in the synagogues (to which perhaps their position entitled them). They have a pleasure in hearing themselves called "Rabbi," a crime of which Christ's disciples are especially to beware. They shut up the kingdom of heaven, neither entering themselves, nor allowing others to enter. They compass sea and land to make one proselyte, but all this seeming zeal for religion is worthless; when they have the proselyte, they make him still more a child of hell than themselves. They pay tithes regularly, but omit the weightier virtues; unhappily too common a failing with the votaries of all religions. They make the outside of the cup and platter clean, but within they are full of extortion and excess. Like whited sepulchres, they look well enough outside, but this aspect of righteousness is a mere cloak for hypocrisy and wickedness. They honour God with their lips, but their heart is far from him.²

¹ Mk. xii. 40; Mt. xxiii. 14.

² Mt. xxiii. 1-33; Mk. vii. 6. I omit the concluding verses in Mt. xxiii., as the allusion in ver. 35 renders it impossible that Christ could have uttered them. Indeed, the whole chapter is suspicious; but as portions of it are confirmed by Mark, I conclude that the sentiments at least, if not the precise words, are genuine.

He uses towards them such designations as these:—"Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites;" "you blind guides;" "you fools and blind;" "thou blind Pharisee;" "you serpents, you generation of vipers." If we may believe that he was the author of a parable contained only in Luke, he used a Pharisee as his typical hypocrite, and held up a publican—one of a degraded class—as far superior in genuine virtue to this self-righteous representative of the hated order.¹

Had the Pharisees been actually guilty of the exceeding wickedness which Jesus thought proper to ascribe to them, his career would surely have been cut short at a much earlier stage. As it was, they seem to have borne with considerable patience the extreme license which he permitted himself in his language against them. Nay, I venture to say that had he confined himself to language, however strong, he might have escaped the fate which actually befell him. And the evidence of this proposition is to be found in the extreme mildness with which his apostles were afterwards treated by the Sanhedrim, even when they acted in direct disobedience to its orders.² Only Stephen, who courted martyrdom by his language, was put to death, and that for the legal offence of blasphemy. Ordinary prudence would have saved Jesus. For his arrest was closely connected with his expulsion of the money-changers from the temple court. Not indeed that he was condemned to death on that account, but that this ill-considered deed was the immediate incentive of the legal proceedings,

¹ Lu. xviii. 9-14.

² Acts iv. 15-21, and v. 27-42.

which subsequently ended, contrary perhaps to the expectation of his prosecutors, in his conviction by the Sanhedrim on a capital charge. Let us consider the evidence of this. For the convenience of persons going to pay tribute at the temple, some money-changers—probably neither better nor worse than others of their trade—sat outside for the purpose of receiving the current Roman coinage and giving the national money, which alone the authorities of the temple received in exchange. Certain occasions in life requiring an offering of doves, these too were sold in the precincts of the temple, obviously to the advantage of the public. Had Jesus disapproved of this practice, he might have denounced it in public, and have endeavoured to persuade the people to give it up. Instead of this, he entered the temple, expelled the buyers and sellers (by what means we do not know), upset the money-changers' tables and the dove-sellers' seats, and permitted no one to carry a vessel through the temple. "Is it not written," he exclaimed, "'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations?' but you have made it a den of thieves."¹ The action and the words were alike unjustifiable. The extreme care of the Jews to preserve the sanctity of their temple is well known from secular history. Nothing that they had done or were likely to do could prevent it from remaining a house of prayer. And even if they had suffered it to be desecrated by commerce, was it, they would ask, for Jesus to fall suddenly upon men

¹ Mk. xi. 15-18 ; Mt. xxi. 12, 13 ; Lu. xix. 45-48.

who were but pursuing a calling which custom had sanctioned, and which they had no reason to think illegal or irreligious? Was it for him to stigmatise them all indiscriminately as "thieves?" Plainly not. He had, in their opinion, exceeded all bounds of decorum, to say nothing of law, in this deed of violence and of passion. Thus, there was nothing for it now but to restrain the further excesses he might be tempted to commit.

No immediate steps were, however, taken to punish this outrage. It is alleged that Jesus escaped because of the reputation he enjoyed among the people. At any rate, the course of the authorities was the mildest they could possibly adopt. They contented themselves with asking Jesus by what authority he did these things, a question which assuredly they had every right to put. He answered by another question, promising, if they answered it, he would answer theirs. Was John's baptism from heaven or from men? Hereupon the Evangelists depict the perplexity which they imagine arose among the priests. If they said, from heaven, Jesus would proceed to ask why they had not received him; if from men, they would encounter the popular impression that he was a prophet. All this, however, may be mere speculation; we return within the region of the actual knowledge of the Evangelists when we come to their answer. "And they say in answer to Jesus, '*We do not know.*' And Jesus says to them, '*Neither do I tell you by what authority I do these things.*'"¹

¹ Mk. xi. 27-33; Mt. xxi. 23-27; Lu. xx. 1-8.

Observe in this reply the conduct of Jesus. He had promised the priests that if they answered his question he also would answer theirs. They *did* answer his question as best they could, and he refused to answer theirs! Even in the English version, where the contrast between him and them is disguised by the employment of the same word "tell" as the translation of two very different verbs in the original, the distinction between "We *cannot* tell" and "I *do not*," that is "will not tell," is palpable enough. But it is far more so in the original. The priests did not by any means decline to answer the question; they simply said, what may very likely have been true, that they did not know whence the baptism of John was. In the divided state of public opinion about John, nothing could be more natural. They could not reply decidedly if their feelings were undecided. Their reply, "We do not know," was then a perfectly proper one. The corresponding reply on the part of Jesus would have been, "I do not know by what authority I do these things;" but this of course it was impossible to give. The chief priests, scribes, and elders had more right to ask Jesus to produce his authority for his assault than he had to interrogate them about their religious opinions. But Jesus, though he had for the moment evaded a difficulty, must have been well aware that he was not out of danger. It was probably in consequence of these events that he found it necessary to retire to a secret spot, known only to friends. Here, however, he was discovered by his opponents, and brought before the Sanhedrim to answer to

the charges now alleged against his character and doctrine.

To some extent these charges are matter of conjecture. The Gospels intimate that there was much evidence against him which they have not reported. Now it is impossible for us to do complete justice to the tribunal which heard the case unless we know the nature and number of the offences of which the prisoner was accused. One of them, the promise to destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, may have presented itself to their minds as an announcement of a serious purpose, especially after the recent violence done to the traders. However this may be, there was now sufficient evidence before the court to require the high priest to call upon Jesus for his reply. He might therefore have made his defence if he had thought proper. He declined to do so. Again the high priest addressed him, solemnly requiring him to say whether he was the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus admitted that such was his conviction, and declared that they would afterwards see him return in the clouds of heaven. Hereupon the high priest rent his clothes, and asked what further evidence could be needed. All had heard his blasphemy ; what did they think of it ? All of them concurred in condemning him to death.¹

The three Evangelists who report the trial all agree that the blasphemy thus uttered was accepted at once as full and sufficient ground for the con-

¹ Mk. xv. 53-64 ; Mt. xxvi. 57-66 ; Lu. xxii. 66-71.

viction of Jesus. Now, I see no reason whatever to doubt that the priests who were thus scandalised by his declaration were perfectly sincere in the horror they professed. All who have at all realised the extremely strong feelings of the Jews on the subject of Monotheism, will easily understand that anything which in the least impugned it would be regarded by them with the utmost aversion. And a man who claimed to be the Son of God certainly detracted somewhat from the sole and exclusive adoration which they considered to be due to Jehovah. As indeed the event has proved ; for the Christian Church soon departed from pure Monotheism, adopting the dogma of the Trinity ; while Christ along with his Father, and even more than his Father, became an object of its worship. So that if the Jews considered it their supreme obligation to preserve the purity of their Jehovistic faith, as their Scriptures taught them to believe it was, they were right in putting down Jesus by forcible means. No doubt they were wrong in holding such an opinion. It was not, in fact, their duty to guard their faith by persecution. They would have been morally better had they understood the modern doctrine of religious liberty, unknown as it was to Christians themselves until some sixteen centuries after the death of Christ. But for their mistaken notions on this head they were only in part responsible. They had inherited their creed with its profound intolerance. Their history, their legislators, their prophets, all conspired to uphold persecution for the maintenance of religious truth. They could not believe in their sacred books,

and disbelieve the propriety of persecution. Before they could leave Jesus at large to teach his subversive doctrines, they must have ceased to be Jews ; and this it was impossible for them to do. We must not be too hard upon men whose only crime was that they believed in a false religion.

According to the dictates of that religion, Jesus ought to have been stoned. But the Roman supremacy precluded the Jews from giving effect to their own laws. Jesus was therefore taken before the procurator, and accused of "many things." The charge of blasphemy of course would weigh nothing in the mind of a Roman ; and it is evident that another aspect of the indictment was brought prominently before Pilate ; namely, the pretension of Jesus to be king of the Jews. As to the substantial truth of this second charge, we are saved the necessity of discussion, for Jesus himself, when questioned by Pilate, at once admitted it. But whether it was made in malice, and in a somewhat different sense from that in which Pilate understood it, is not so clear. Jesus at no time, so far as we know, put forward any direct claim to immediate temporal dominion. At the same time it must be remembered that the ideas of Messiahship and possession of the kingdom were so intimately connected in the minds of the Jews, that they were probably unable to dissociate them. Unfit as Jesus plainly was for the exercise of the government, they might well believe that, if received by any considerable number of the people, it would be forced upon him as the logical result of his career. Nor were these fears unreasonable. His entry into Jerusalem riding on an ass (an animal expressly selected as emblematic of

his royalty), with palm-branches strewed before him, and admirers calling "Hosanna!" as he went, pointed to a very real and serious danger. Another such demonstration might with the utmost ease have passed into a disturbance of the peace, not to say a tumult, which the Romans would have quenched in blood unsparingly and indiscriminately shed. Jesus was really therefore a dangerous character, not so much to the Romans, as to the Jews. Not being prepared to accept him as their king in fact, they were almost compelled in self-preservation to denounce him as their would-be king to Pilate.

His execution followed. His supposed resurrection, and the renewed propagation of his faith, followed that. It has been widely believed that because Christianity was not put down by the death of its founder, because, indeed, it burst out again in renewed vigour, therefore the measures taken against him were a complete failure, and served only to confer additional glory and power on the religion he had taught. But this opinion arises from a confusion of ideas. If they aimed at preserving their own nation from what they deemed an impious heresy—and I see no proof that they aimed at anything else—the Jewish authorities were perfectly successful. Christianity, which, if our accounts be true, threatened to seduce large numbers of people from their allegiance to the orthodox creed, was practically extinguished among the Jews themselves by the death of Christ. They could not possibly believe in a crucified Messiah. Only a very small band of disciples persisted in adhering to Jesus, justifying their continued faith by asserting that he had risen from the tomb. But it was no longer among the

countrymen of Jesus, whom he had especially sought to attach to his person and his doctrine, that this small remnant of his followers could find their converts. Neither then, nor at any subsequent time, has Christianity been able to wean the Jews from their ancient faith. The number of those who, from that time to this, have abandoned it in favour of the more recent religion has been singularly small. If, as is probable, there was during the earthly career of Jesus a growing danger that his teaching might lead to the formation of a sect to which many minds would be attracted, that danger was completely averted.

True, Christianity, when rejected by the Jews, made rapid progress among the Gentiles. But it was no business of the authorities at Jerusalem to look after the religion of heathen nations. They might have thought, had they foreseen the future of Christianity, that a creed which originated among themselves, and had in it a large admixture of Hebrew elements, was better than the worship of the pagan deities. Be this as it may, the particular form of error which the Gentiles might embrace was evidently no concern of theirs. But they had a duty, or thought they had one, towards their own people, who looked to them for guidance, and that was to preserve the religion that had been handed down from their forefathers uncorrupted and unmixed. This they endeavoured to do by stifling the new-born heresy of Jesus before it had become too powerful to be stifled. Their measures, having regard to the end they had in view, were undoubtedly politic, and even just.

For were they not perfectly right in supposing that faith in Christ was dangerous to faith in Moses? The

event has proved it beyond possibility of question. Not indeed that they could perceive the extent of the peril, for neither Jesus nor any of his disciples had ventured then to throw off Judaism altogether. But they did perceive, with a perfectly correct insight, that the Christians were setting up a new authority alongside of the authorities which alone they recognised,—the Scriptures and the traditional interpretation of the Scriptures. And it was precisely the adoption of a new authority which they desired to prevent. So completely was their foresight on this point justified, that not long after the death of Christ, his assumed followers received converts without circumcision, that all-essential rite ; and that, after the lapse of no long period of time, Judaism was entirely abandoned, and a new religion, with new dogmas, new ritual, and new observances, was founded in its place. Surely the action of the men who sat in judgment upon Jesus needs no further justification, from their own point of view, than this one consideration. They had no more sacred trust, in their own eyes, than to prevent the admission of any other object of worship than the Lord Jehovah. Christ speedily became among Christians an object of worship. They owned no more solemn duty than to observe in all its parts the law delivered by their God to Moses. That law was almost instantly abandoned by the Christian Church. They knew of no more unpardonable crime than apostasy from their faith. That apostasy was soon committed by the Jewish Christians.

On all these grounds, then, I venture to maintain that the spiritual rulers of Judæa were not so blameworthy as has been commonly supposed in the execu-

tion of Jesus of Nazareth. Judged by the principles of universal morality, they were undoubtedly wrong. Judged by the principles of their own religion, they were no less undoubtedly right.

SUBDIVISION 5.—*What did he think of himself?*

Having endeavoured, as far as our imperfect information will admit, to realise the view that would be taken of Jesus by contemporary Jews, let us seek if possible to realise the view which he took of himself. In what relation did he suppose himself to stand to God the Father? And in what relation to the Hebrew law? What was his conception of his own mission, and of the manner in which it could best be fulfilled?

Though, in replying to these questions, we suffer somewhat from the scarcity of the materials, we do not labour under the same disadvantages as those we encountered in the preceding section. For there we had to judge between two bitterly hostile parties, of which only one had presented its case. And from the highly coloured statement of this one party we had to unravel, as best we could, whatever circumstances might be permitted to weigh in favour of the other. Here we have no conflicting factions to obscure the truth. The opinion formed by Jesus of himself has been handed down to us by his own disciples, who, even if they did not perfectly understand him, must at least have understood him far better than anybody else. And if the picture they give us of the conception he had formed of his own office be consistent with itself, there is also the utmost probability that it is true. Especially will this hold good if this conception

should be found to differ materially from that not long afterwards framed about him by the Christian Church.

Consider first the idea he entertained concerning his Messianic character, and his consequent relation to God. His conviction that he was the Messiah, who was sent with a divine message to his nation, was evidently the mainspring of his life. It was under this conviction that he worked his cures and preached his sermons. Probably it strengthened as he continued in his career, though of this there is no positive evidence. Possibly, however, the instructions he gave on several occasions to those whom he had healed, and once to his disciples, to tell no man about him, arose from a certain diffidence about the power by which his miracles were effected,¹ and a reluctance to accept the honour which the populace would have conferred upon him. However this may be, he certainly put forward his belief on this subject plainly enough, and its acceptance by his disciples no doubt confirmed it in his own mind, while its rejection by the nation at large, especially the more learned portion of it, gave a flavour of bitterness to the tone in which he insisted upon it. The title by which he habitually designates himself is the Son of man. This was, no doubt, selected as a more modest name than "Son of God." The latter was never (if we exclude the fourth Gospel) applied by Jesus to himself, but when applied to him by others, he made no objection to it, but accepted it as his due. The inference from his behaviour is, that he liked to be thought the Son of God (as in-

¹ *E.g.*, Mk. i. 44; Mt. ix. 30.

deed is shown by his eulogy of Peter when that apostle had so described him),¹ but that he did not quite venture to claim the title for himself. That he was ever imagined, either by himself or others, to be the Son of God in the literal, materialistic sense in which the term was afterwards understood, it would be an entire mistake to suppose. No such notion had ever been formulated by the Jewish mind, and it would, no doubt, have filled his earliest disciples with horror. As Mr Westcott truly observes, "Years must elapse before we can feel that the words of one who talked with men were indeed the words of God."² Nor was the Hebrew Jehovah the sort of divinity who would have had a son by a young village maiden. Proceedings of that kind were left to the heathen deities. Nor did Christ, in claiming a filial relationship to God, ever intend to claim unity with the divine essence, still less to assert that he actually was God himself. This notion of identity would receive no sanction even from the fourth Gospel, which does, quite unlike its predecessors, lend some sanction to that of unity in nature. The best proof of this is that Jesus never, at any period of his life, desired his followers to worship him, either as God or as the Son of God. Had he believed of himself what his followers subsequently believed of him, that he was one of the constituent persons in a divine trinity, he must have enjoined his apostles both to address him in prayer themselves, and to desire their converts to address him. It is quite plain that he did nothing of the kind, and that they never supposed him to have done so. Belief in

¹ Mt. xvi. 17 ; vers. 18 and 19 are probably interpolations.

² Canon of New Testament, p. 64.

Christ as the Messiah was taught as the first dogma of apostolic Christianity, but adoration of Christ as God was not taught at all. But we are not left in this matter to depend on conjectural inferences. The words of Jesus are plain. Whenever occasion arose, he asserted his inferiority to the Father (as Milton has proved to demonstration),¹ though, as no one had then dreamt of his equality, it is natural that the occasions should not have been frequent. He made himself inferior in knowledge when he said that of the day and hour of the day of judgment no one knew, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son; no one except the Father.² He made himself inferior in power when he said that seats on his right hand and on his left in the kingdom of heaven were not his to give;³ inferior in virtue when he desired a certain man not to address him as "Good master," for there was none good but God.⁴ The words of his prayer at Gethsemane, "all things are possible unto thee," imply that all things were not possible to him; while its conclusion, "not what I will, but what thou wilt," indicates submission to a superior, not the mere execution of a purpose of his own.⁵ Indeed, the whole prayer would have been a mockery, useless for any purpose but the deception of the disciples, if he had himself been identical with the Being to whom he prayed, and had merely been giving effect by his death to their common counsels. While the cry of agony from the cross, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"⁶ would have been quite unmean-

¹ Milton, *Treatise on Christian Doctrine*, Sumner's translation, p. 100 ff.

² Mk. xiii. 32.

³ Mk. x. 40.

⁴ Mk. x. 18.

⁵ Mk. xiv. 36.

⁶ Mk. xv. 34.

ing if the person forsaken and the person forsaking had been one and the same. Either, then, we must assume that the language of Jesus has been misreported, or we must admit that he never for a moment pretended to be co-equal, co-eternal, or consubstantial with God.

Throughout his public life he spoke of himself as one who was sent by God for a certain purpose. What was that purpose? Was it, as the Gentile Christians so readily assumed, to abolish the laws and customs of the Jews, and to substitute others in their stead? Did he, for example, propose to supplant circumcision by baptism? the Sabbath by the Sunday? the synagogue by the church? the ceremonial observances of the law of Moses by observances of another kind? If so, let the evidence be produced. For unless we find among his recorded instructions some specific injunction to his disciples that they were no longer to be Jews, but Christians, we cannot assume that he intended any such revolution. Now, not only can no such injunction be produced, but the whole course of his life negatives the supposition that any was given. For while teaching much on many subjects, he never at any time alludes to the Mosaic dispensation as a temporary arrangement, destined to yield to a higher law. Yet it would surely have been strange if he had left his disciples to guess at his intentions on this all-important subject. Moreover, it came directly in his way when he censured the Pharisees. He frequently accuses them of overlaying the law with a multitude of unnecessary and troublesome rules; but while objecting to these, he never for a moment hints that the very law itself was now

to become a thing of the past. Quite the reverse. The Pharisees were very scrupulous about paying tithes, and disregarded weightier matters; these, he says, they ought to have done, and not to have left the other undone. If those tithes were no longer to be paid (at least not for the same objects), why does he not say so? Again, he charges them with transgressing the commandment of God by their tradition; where it is the accretions round the law, and not the law itself, which he attacks. In one case he even directly imposes an observance of the legal requirements on a man over whom he has influence.¹ Moreover, he himself evidently continued to perform the obligations of his Jewish religion until the very end of his life, for one of his last acts was to eat the pass-over with his disciples. The only institution which he apparently desires to alter at all is the Sabbath, and there it is plain that he aims at an amendment in the mode of its observance, not at its entire abolition. Indeed, he justifies his disciples by invoking the example of David, an orthodox Hebrew; and very happily remarks, that the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath—one of his best and most epigrammatic sayings. But an institution made for man was indeed one to be rationally observed, but by no means one to be lightly tampered with. Jesus, in fact, was altogether a Jew, and though an ardent reformer, he desired to reform within the limits of Judaism, not beyond them.

If further proof were needed of this than the fact that he himself neither abandoned the religion of his birth, nor sought to obtain disciples except among

¹ Mk. i. 44.

those who belonged to it, it would be found in his treatment of the heathen woman whose daughter was troubled with a devil. To her he distinctly declared that he was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. In reply to her further persistence, he told her that it was not well to take the children's meat and throw it to dogs. Nothing but her appropriate yet modest answer induced him to accede to her request.¹ Further confirmation is afforded by his instructions to his disciples, whom he desired not to go either to the Gentiles or the Samaritans, but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.² His own practice was altogether in conformity with these instructions. He markedly confined the benefits of his teaching to his fellow-countrymen. Once only is he said to have visited the neighbourhood of Tyre and Sidon, and then he was anxious to preserve the strictest incognito.³ Even when the Jews refused to believe in him, he sought no converts among the Gentiles. He never even intimated that he would receive such converts without their previous adoption of the Jewish faith, and after his decease his most intimate disciples were doubtful whether it was lawful to associate with uncircumcised people.⁴ Not only, therefore, had he himself never done so, but he had left no instructions behind him that such a relaxation of Jewish scruples might ever be permitted. True, when disappointed among his own people, he now and then contrasted them in unflattering terms with the heathen. Chorazin and Bethsaida were worse than Tyre and Sidon ; Capernaum less open to convic-

¹ Mt. xv. 21-28.² Mt. x. 5, 6.³ Mk. vii. 24.⁴ Acts x. 28 ; xi. 2, 3.

tion than Sodom.¹ The faith of the heathen centurion was greater than any he had found in Israel.² But all these expressions of embittered feeling imply that it was in Israel he had looked for faith, towards Israel that his desires were turned. To discover faith out of it might be an agreeable surprise, but, as a general rule, was neither to be expected nor sought.

Having, then, determined what the purport of his mission was not, let us try to discover what it was. The quest is not difficult. The whole of his teaching is pervaded by one ever-recurring keynote, which those who have ears to hear it cannot miss. He came to announce the approach of what he termed "the kingdom of heaven." A great revolution was to take place on earth. God was to come, accompanied by Jesus, to reward the virtuous and to punish the wicked. A totally new order of things was to be substituted in lieu of the present unjust and unequal institutions. And Jesus was sent by God to warn the children of Israel to prepare for this kingdom of heaven. There was but little time to lose, for even now the day of judgment was at hand. The mind of Jesus was laden with this one great thought, to which, with him, all others were subordinate. It runs through his maxims of conduct, his parables, his familiar converse with his disciples. Far from him was the notion of founding a new religion, to be extended throughout the world and to last for ages. It was a work of much more immediate urgency which he came to do. "Prepare for the kingdom of heaven, for it will come upon you in the present generation;" such was the burden of his

¹ Mt. xi. 20-24.

² Mt. viii. 10.

message. Let us hear his own mode of delivering it to men.

The very beginning of his preaching, according to Mark, was in this strain : "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has approached ; repent, and believe the Gospel."¹ Precisely similar is the purport of his earliest doctrine according to Matthew.² How thoroughly he believed that the time was fulfilled is shown by his decided declaration that there were some among his hearers who would not taste of death till they had seen the kingdom of God come with power,³ a saying which, as it would never have been invented, is undoubtedly genuine. He told his disciples that Elias, who was expected to precede the kingdom of heaven, had already come.⁴

Over and over again, in a hundred different ways, this absorbing thought finds expression in his language. The one and only message the disciples are instructed to carry to the "lost sheep of the house of Israel" is that the kingdom of heaven is at hand.⁵ When a city does not receive them, they are to wipe off the dust of it against them, and bid them be sure that the kingdom of God is near them.⁶ In the coming judgment, Chorazin, Bethsaida, and above all his own place Capernaum, were to suffer more than Tyre and Sidon. Earthly matters assume, in consequence of this conviction of their temporary nature, a very trivial aspect. The disciples are to take no thought for the morrow ; the morrow will take thought for itself. Nor are they to trouble themselves about food and clothing, but to seek first the

¹ Mk. i. 15.

² Mt. iv. 17.

³ Mk. ix. 1.

⁴ Mk. ix. 13.

⁵ Mt. x. 7.

⁶ Lu. x. 11.

kingdom of God.¹ They are not to lay up treasure on earth, but in heaven, in order that their hearts may be there.² Moreover, they must be always on the watch, as the Son of man will come upon them at an unexpected hour. It would not do then to be engaged as the wicked antediluvians were when overtaken by the flood, in the occupations of eating and drinking, or marrying and giving in marriage. Instead of this, they must be like the faithful servant whom his master on returning to his house found watching.³ Preparation is to be made for the kingdom which their Father will give them by selling what they have and bestowing alms, so laying up an incorruptible treasure; by keeping their loins girded and their lights burning.⁴ Neglect of these precautions will be punished by exclusion from the joys of the kingdom, as shown in the parable of the ten virgins.⁵ But the indications of the great event are not understood by the people, who are able to read the signs of the coming weather, but not those of the times;⁶ an inability which might have been due to the fact that they had had some experience of the one kind of signs and none of the other. On another occasion, he observes that the law and the prophets were till John; since then the kingdom of God has been preached, and every man presses into it.⁷ Here he specially proclaims himself as the preacher of the kingdom; the man who brought mankind this new revelation. Such was the manner in which this revelation was

¹ Mt. vi. 31-34.

² Mt. vi. 19-21.

³ Mt. xxiv. 38, 42, 43; Lu. xii. 37, 38.

⁷ Lu. xvi. 16.

⁴ Lu. xii. 32.

⁵ Mt. xxv. 1-13.

⁶ Lu. xii. 54-57.

announced, that some at least of those who heard him thought that the kingdom was to come immediately. To counteract this view he told the parable of the nobleman who went from home to receive a kingdom, leaving his servants in charge of certain monies, and rewarded them on his return according to the amount of interest they had obtained by usury, punishing one of them who had made no use of the sum intrusted to him.¹ He himself, of course, was the nobleman who received his kingdom and returned again to judge his servants. So urgent was the message he had to deliver, that (according to one Evangelist) a man who wished to bury his father before joining him was told to let the dead bury their dead, but to go himself and announce the kingdom of God; while another, who asked leave to bid farewell to his family, was warned that no man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, was fit for that kingdom.²

The arrival of the kingdom was to be preceded by various signs. There would be false Christs; there would be wars, earthquakes, and famines; there would be persecutions of the faithful; but the Gospel (that is, the announcement of the approach of this new state of things) must first be published in all nations.³ Then the sun and moon would be darkened and the stars fall; the Son of man would come in power and glory, and gather his elect from all parts of the earth. The existing generation was not

¹ Lu. xix. 11-27.

² Lu. ix. 58-62.

³ This verse is so inconsistent with other declarations of Christ, especially with Mt. x. 23, that I am disposed to regard it as an interpolation.

to pass till all these things were done. Not even the Son knew when this would happen ; but as it might come suddenly and unexpectedly upon them, they were to be continually on the watch.¹ The apostles would not even finish the cities of Israel before the Son of man had come.²

Little is said in description of the nature of the kingdom of heaven except by the method of illustration. The main result to be gathered from numerous allusions to it is that justice is to prevail. Thus, the kingdom of heaven is said to be like a man who sowed good seed in his field, but in whose property an enemy maliciously mingled tares. At the harvest the tares are to be burnt, and the wheat gathered into the barn. This parable Jesus himself explained. The tares are the wicked ; the wheat represents "the children of the kingdom." And as tares are burnt, so "the Son of man shall send his angels, and collect from his kingdom all offences, and those who do wickedness, and shall throw them into the furnace of fire ; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the just shall shine out like the sun in the kingdom of their Father." The same idea is expressed in the illustration of the net cast into the sea, which gathers good fish and bad. Just as the fishermen separate these, so the angels at the end of the world will separate the wicked from the midst of the just. Other comparisons represent the influence on the heart of faith in the kingdom. Thus, the kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard-seed, which, though the smallest of seeds, becomes the largest of herbs. Or it is like leaven leavening three measures

¹ Mk. xiii. ; Mt. xxiv.

² Mt. x. 23.

of meal. Again, it is like treasure hid in a field, or a pearl of great price.¹

The best qualification for pre-eminence in the kingdom was humility.

When asked who was to be greatest in the kingdom of heaven, Jesus replied that it would be he who humbled himself like a little child.² He delights in the exhibition of striking contrasts between the present and the future state of things. The first are to be last, and the last first. Those who have made great sacrifices now are then to receive vast rewards.³ He who has lost his life for his sake is to find it, and he who has found it is to lose it.⁴ The stone rejected by the builder is to become the head of the corner.⁵ The kingdom of God is to be taken from the privileged nation and given to another more worthy of it.⁶ Publicans and harlots are to take precedence of the respectable classes in entering the kingdom.⁷ It is scarcely possible for rich men to enter it at all, though God may perhaps admit them by an extraordinary exertion of power.⁸ Many even who trust in their high character for correct religion will find themselves rejected. But they will be safe who have both heard the sayings of Jesus and done them. They will have built their houses on rocks, from which the storms which usher in the kingdom will not dislodge them. Those, however, who hear these sayings, and neglect to perform them, will be like foolish men who have built their houses on sand, where the storms will beat them down, and great will be their fall.⁹

¹ Mt. xiii. 24-50.

² Mt. xviii. 1-4.

³ Mk. x. 29-31.

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⁴ Mt. x. 39.

⁵ Mk. xii. 10.

⁶ Mt. xxi. 43.

⁷ Mt. xxi. 31.

⁸ Mk. x. 23-27.

⁹ Mt. vii. 22-29.

That the kingdom is to be on earth, not in some unknown heaven, is manifest from the numerous references of Jesus to the time when the Son of man will "come;" a time which none can know, yet for which all are to watch. He never speaks of men "going" to the kingdom of heaven; it is the kingdom of heaven which is to come to them. And the most remarkable of the many contrasts will be that between the present humiliation of the Son and his future glory. He will return to execute his Father's decrees. His judges themselves will see him "sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven."¹ Instead of standing as a prisoner at the bar, he will then be enthroned as a judge. "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he shall sit on the throne of his glory; and all the nations shall be collected before him, and he shall separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; and he shall put the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on his left." The goats, who have done harm, are then to go into everlasting punishment; and the sheep, who have done good, are to pass into eternal life.²

This equitable adjustment of rewards and punishments to merit and demerit is the leading conception in the revolution which the kingdom of heaven is to make. The faithful servant is to be made ruler over his master's goods; the unfaithful one to be cut off and assigned a portion with the hypocrites. The virgins whose lamps are ready burning will be admitted to

¹ Mt. xxvi. 64.

² Mt. xxv. 31-46.

the marriage festival. The servants who make the best use of the property committed to their charge will be rewarded, while those who have failed to employ it properly will be cast into outer darkness.¹ So also the wicked husbandmen in the vineyard, who ill-treated their master's servants and killed his heir, are to be destroyed when he comes, and the vineyard is to be committed to other cultivators.² All those, on the other hand, who have made great sacrifices for the sake of Christ will receive a hundredfold compensation for all that they have now abandoned.³

Such was the sort of notion—rude, yet tolerably definite—which Jesus had formed of the kingdom his Father was about to found, and for the coming of which he taught his disciples to pray. This hope of a reign of justice, of an exaltation of the lowly and virtuous, and a depression of the proud and wicked, animated his teaching and inspired his life. To make known this great event, so shortly to overtake them, to mankind, was a duty with which in his opinion he had been charged by God; to receive this message at his hands was in his judgment the first of virtues, to spurn it the most unpardonable of crimes.

SUBDIVISION 6.—*What did his disciples think of him?*

There is on record a remarkable conversation which affords us a glimpse, both of the rumours that were current about Christ among the people, and also of the view taken of him by his nearest friends during his lifetime. Jesus had gone with his disciples into

¹ Mt. xxiv. 42-xxv. 30.

² Mk. xii. 1-9.

³ Mt. xix. 29, 30.

the towns of Cæsarea Philippi. On the way, being apparently curious about the state of public opinion, he asked them, "Whom do men say that I am?" To this they replied, "John the Baptist; and some say Elias, and others that thou art one of the prophets." To which Jesus rejoined, "But you, whom say you that I am?" Peter returned the answer, "Thou art the Messiah;" or "Thou art the Messiah, the Son of the living God." It is remarkable that Peter alone is represented as replying to this second question, as if the others had not yet attained to the conviction which this apostle held of the Messiahship of Jesus. Especially would this conclusion be confirmed if we adopted the version of Matthew, where Jesus expresses his high approbation of Peter's answer.¹ If this apostle was peculiarly blessed on account of his perception of this truth, it may be inferred that his companions had either not yet perceived, or were not yet sure of it. That Peter did not mean by calling him the Messiah to state that he was a portion of the deity himself, is evident from what follows; for Jesus having predicted his future sufferings, "Peter began to rebuke him," anxious to avert the omen. Had he believed that it was God himself with whom he was conversing, he could hardly have ventured to question his perfect knowledge of the future.

The doctrine of the divinity of Christ is not, in fact, to be found in the New Testament. Even the writer of the fourth Gospel, who holds the highest and most mystical view of his nature, does not teach that. Often indeed in that Gospel does Jesus speak of himself as one with the Father. But the dogmatic force

¹ Mk. viii. 27-30; Mt. xvi. 13-20.

of all these expressions is measured by the fact that precisely in the same sense he speaks of the disciples as one with himself. As the Father and he are in one another, so he prays that the disciples may be one in them.¹ Moreover, when the Jews charged him with making himself God, he met them by inquiring whether it was not written in their law, "I said, Ye are gods." If, then, those to whom the word of God came were called gods, was it blasphemy in him, whom the Father had sanctified and sent, to say, "I am the Son of God?"² Here, then, the term which Jesus appropriates is "Son of God," and this he considers admissible because the Hebrew people generally had been called gods. Evidently, then, he does not admit the charge of making himself God.

The authority of the fourth Gospel is, of course, of no value in enabling us to determine what Jesus said or did, but it is of great value as evidence of the view taken about him by those of his disciples who, at this early period, had advanced the furthest in the direction of placing him on a level with God himself. It is either the latest, or one of the latest, compositions in the New Testament, and it proves that, at the period when its author lived, even the boldest spirits had not ventured on the dogma which afterwards became the corner-stone of the Christian creed.

Throughout the rest of the canonical books, Jesus is simply the Messiah, the Son of God; in whom, in that sense, it is a duty to believe. Whoever believes this much is, according to the first epistle of John, born of God.³

Clearer still is the evidence that, in the opinion of

¹ Jo. xvii. 21.

² Jo. x. 33-37.

³ 1 John v. 1.

those most competent to judge, Jesus had no intention of abolishing the observance of the law of Moses. So far were his disciples from imagining that he contemplated any such change, that they were at first in doubt whether it was allowable for them even to relax the rules which forbade social intercourse with heathens. The writer of the Acts of the Apostles, however, informs us that, when an important convert was to be won over from the pagan ranks, Peter had the privilege of a vision which enjoined him not to call anything which God had cleansed common or unclean. Interpreting this to mean that he might associate with the Gentiles, he received the heathen convert, Cornelius, with all cordiality, and even preached the gospel of Jesus to the uncircumcised company by whom he was surrounded. That this was a novel measure is plainly evinced by the fact that the Jewish Christians who were present were astonished that the gift of the Holy Ghost should be poured out upon the Gentiles. They therefore had conceived that Christianity was to be confined to themselves.¹

But there is more direct evidence of the same fact. When Peter returned to Jerusalem, the circumcised believers there found fault with him because he had gone in to uncircumcised men, and had eaten with them. Peter, of course, related his vision in self-defence, and since there was no reply to be made to such an argument as this, they accepted the new and unexpected fact which he announced: "Well, then, God has given repentance to life to the Gentiles also."² Paul, who was too strong-minded to need a revelation to teach him the best way of promoting

¹ Acts x.

² Acts xi. 1-18.

Christian interests, also received heathen converts without requiring them to come under Jewish obligations. But the conduct of these apostles was far from meeting with unmixed approbation in the community. Some men from Judæa came to Antioch, where Paul and Barnabas were, and informed the brethren there that unless they were circumcised they could not be saved. So important was this question deemed, that Paul and Barnabas, after much disputing with these Judaic Christians, agreed to go with them to Jerusalem to refer the matter to a council of the apostles and elders. Obviously, then, it was a new case which had arisen. No authoritative *dictum* of Jesus could be produced. The possibility of having to receive heathens among his disciples was one he had never contemplated. Called to deal with this supremely important question, on which the whole future of the Church turned, the apostles displayed moderation and good sense. Acting on the concurrent advice of Peter, Paul, James, and Barnabas, they wrote to the brethren in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia, that they had determined to lay no greater burden upon them than these necessary things:—1. Abstinence from meat offered to idols; 2. from blood; 3. from things strangled; 4. from fornication. Hence it will be seen that they absolved the heathen believers from all Jewish observances except two, those that forbade blood and things strangled. These, from long habit and the fixed prejudices of their race, no doubt appeared to them to have some deeper foundation than a mere arbitrary command. These therefore they enjoined even upon pagans.¹

¹ Acts xv. 1–31.

Be it observed, however, that this dispensation applied only to those who were not of Hebrew blood. The apostles and elders assembled at Jerusalem had no thought of dispensing *themselves* from the binding force of the law of Moses. To observe it was alike their privilege and their duty. They did not conceive that, in becoming Christians, they had ceased to be Jews, any more than a Catholic who becomes a Protestant conceives that he has ceased to be a Christian. The question whether those who had been born Jews should abandon their ancient religion was not even raised at this time among them. The only question was whether those who had not been born Jews should adopt it.

Innovation, however, is not to be arrested at any given point. Liberty having been conceded to the Gentiles, it was not unnatural that some of the apostles, when living among the Gentiles, should take advantage of it for themselves. No overt rule was adopted on this subject. It seems to have been tacitly understood that all Jews should continue to be bound by the rigour of their native customs, except in so far as they had been modified by common consent; and the attempt of some to escape from this burden was an occasion of no small scandal to the more orthodox members of the sect.¹ Both Peter and Paul indeed, at separate times, were compelled to make some concessions to the extremely strong feeling in favour of the law which existed at headquarters. The conduct of these two eminent apostles merits examination.

Peter, it appears, never gave up Judaism in his own person: but when staying at Antioch he mixed freely

¹ ACTS XXI. 20; GAL. II. 12.

with Gentiles, making no attempt to impose the law upon them, and approving of the proceedings of Paul. It so happened, however, that there came to Antioch some brethren from James at Jerusalem. These men were strict Jews, and Peter was so much afraid of them, that he "withdrew and separated himself" from his former companions. The other Jewish Christians, and even Barnabas, the former friend of Paul, were induced to act in the same way. Paul, who was not likely to lose the opportunity of a little triumph over Peter, ruthlessly exposed his misconduct. According to his account, he publicly addressed him in these terms: "If thou, being a Jew, livest like a Gentile and not like a Jew, why dost thou compel the Gentiles to be like Jews?"¹ What answer Peter returned, or whether he returned any, Paul does not inform us. His charge against Peter I understand to be, not that the apostle had positively adopted heathen customs, and then taken up Jewish ones again, but that he had relaxed in his own favour the rules which forbade Jews from eating with Gentiles. On the appearance of the stricter Christians from Jerusalem he put on the appearance of a strictness equal to their own. Such conduct was consistent with the character of the disciple who had denied his master.

Paul himself, on the other hand, was a complete freethinker. Once converted, the system of which he had formerly been the zealous upholder no longer had any power over his emancipated mind. His robust and logical intellect soon delivered him from the fetters in which he had been bound. Far, however, from following his example, the Christians at Jerusalem

¹ Gal. ii. 11-14.

were shocked at the laxity of his morals. The steps he took to conciliate them are graphically described in the Acts of the Apostles. On visiting the capital, Paul and his companions went to see James, with whom were assembled all the elders; and Paul described the success he had met with among the Gentiles. Hereupon the assembled company, or more probably James as their spokesman, informed Paul what very disadvantageous reports were current concerning him. "Thou seest, brother," they began, "how many thousands of believers there are among the Jews, and all are zealots for the law; and they have been informed of thee that thou teachest the Jews among the Gentiles apostasy from Moses, saying that they should not circumcise their children, nor walk in the customs. What is it, then? It is quite necessary that the multitude should meet, for they will hear that thou art come. Do then this that we tell thee. We have four men who have a vow upon them; take these and be purified with them, and bear the expense with them of having their heads shaven; and all will know that there is nothing in what they have heard about thee, but that thou also walkest in the observation of the law."¹ This sensible advice was adopted by Paul; and the "zealots for the law," who composed the Christian community at Jerusalem, had the satisfaction of seeing him purify himself and enter the temple with the men under the vow. On a later occasion, too, when charged with crime before Felix, Paul mentioned the fact that twelve days ago he had gone up to worship at Jerusalem, as if he had been an orthodox Jew.²

But although he might think it expedient to satisfy

¹ Acts xxi. 20-24.

² Acts xxiv. 11.

James and his friends at Jerusalem by a concession to public opinion, the rumour which had reached the brethren there, if unfounded in the letter, was in fact an accurate representation of the inevitable outcome of Paul's teaching. Possibly he did not wish to press his own views upon others of his nation, and therefore did not interfere with such of them as, though living among heathens, yet adhered religiously to their national customs. But unquestionably his own feelings were strongly enlisted in favour of the abolition of the law, and if the Jewish Christians read and accepted his writings, they could hardly fail to adopt his practice. The law in his opinion was no longer necessary for those who believed in Christ. He is not the true Jew who is one outwardly, nor is that the true circumcision which is outward. He is a Jew who is so internally, and circumcision is of the heart in the spirit, not in the letter. If it be asked what advantage the Jew has, Paul replies that he has much: the first of all, that to his nation were confided the oracles of God.¹ He knows, he says, and is persuaded in the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean in itself, though to him who thinks it so it may be unclean. It is well to abstain from eating flesh or drinking wine, or anything else that may give offence to others, but these things are all unimportant in themselves. One man esteems one day above another; another man esteems them all alike; let each be fully persuaded in his own mind. Only let us not judge one another, nor put stumbling-blocks in one another's way.²

From these considerations it appears that the

¹ Rom. ii. 28, 29 iii. 1, 2.

² Rom. xiv.

suspicious entertained of Paul at Jerusalem were substantially true. Possibly he did not absolutely teach the Jews to abandon the law; possibly he did not even completely abandon it himself. But in his writings he constantly treats it as a thing indifferent in itself; Christians might or might not believe in its obligations, and provided they acted conscientiously, all was well. Along with these very sceptical opinions, however, Paul strongly held to the necessity of worldly prudence. He is very indignant with the "false brethren privily introduced, who slipped in to spy out the liberty we have in Jesus Christ, that they might enslave us; to whom," he adds, "we did not yield by subjection even for an hour."¹ But when the brethren at Jerusalem required him to clear himself from the report that he was not an observer of the law, there came in another principle of action, which he has himself explained with praiseworthy frankness. "To the Jews," he tells the Corinthians, "I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to those under the law as under the law, not being myself under the law,² that I might gain those under the law; to those without law as without law (not being without law to God, but law-abiding to Christ), that I might gain those without law; to the weak I became weak, that I might gain the weak; I became all things to all men, that by all means I might save some."³ Acting on this elastic rule, Paul might

¹ Gal. ii. 4, 5.

² If the words *μη ὡν αὐτὸς ὑπὸ νόμον* be genuine, they contain a distinct declaration (the only one in the apostle's writings) that Paul had thrown off Judaism. Since, however, they are not contained in all the MSS., I do not like to found an argument upon them.

³ 1 Cor. ix. 20-22.

easily comply with all the demands of James and his zealots. To the Jews he became a Jew for the nonce. It was perhaps in the same spirit of worldly wisdom that he took the precaution of circumcising a young convert who was Jewish only on the mother's side, his father having been a Greek.¹

While such was the conduct of this strong-minded reformer, it is plain that his attitude towards the law was not shared by the personal friends of Jesus. James at Jerusalem adhered strictly to Judaism. The other apostles, so far as we know, did the same. The rest of the brethren there did the same. Paul was tolerated, and even cordially received, as the apostle of the Gentiles, but it does not appear that he had any following among the Jews. Had any of the original apostles followed him in his bold innovations, he would surely have mentioned the fact, as he has mentioned the partial adhesion of Peter. On the contrary, he seems in his epistles, when attacking the Judaic type of Christianity, to be arguing as much against them as against the unchristian Jews or the heathen.

Stronger evidence than mere inference is, however, obtainable on this point. The Jewish Christians, who had received their doctrines direct from the companions of Jesus, soon came to form a sect apart, and were known by the name of Ebionites. Of these men, Irenæus tells us that "they use the Gospel according to Matthew only, and repudiate the apostle Paul, maintaining that he was an apostate from the law." Moreover, "they practise circumcision, persevere in the observance of those customs which are

¹ Acts xvi. 1-3.

enjoined by the law, and are so Judaic in their style of life, that they even adore Jerusalem as if it were the house of God.”¹ It was a strange fate that befell these unfortunate people, when, overwhelmed by the flood of heathenism that had swept into the Church, they were condemned as heretics. Yet there is no evidence that they had ever swerved from the doctrines of Jesus, or of the disciples who knew him in his lifetime. Jesus himself had been circumcised, and he certainly never condemned the rite, or spoke of it as useless for the future. He was so Judaic in his style of life that he revered the temple at Jerusalem as “a house of prayer for all nations,” and deemed it his special duty to purify it from what he regarded as pollution. But the torrent of progress swept past the Ebionites, and left them stranded on the shore.

Should the position here maintained with reference to the Judaic character of the early Christians be thought to require further confirmation, I should find it in the weighty words of a theologian who, while entirely Christian in his views, is also one of the highest authorities on the history of the Church. Neander, speaking of this question, observes that the disciples did not at once arrive at the consciousness of that vocation which Christ (in his opinion) had indicated to them, namely, that they should form a distinct community from that of the Jews. On the contrary, they attached themselves to this community in every respect, and all the forms of the national theocracy were holy to them. “They lived in the conviction that these forms would continue as they were till the return of Christ, by which a new and

¹ Adv. Hær. i. 26.

higher order of things was to be founded; and this change they expected as one that was near at hand. Far from them, therefore, lay the thought of the foundation of a new cultus, even if from the light of belief in the Redeemer new ideas had dawned upon them about that which belonged to the essence of the true adoration of God. They took part as zealously in the service of the temple as any pious Jews. Only they believed that a sifting would take place among the theocratic people, and that the better part of it would be incorporated in *their* community by the recognition of Jesus as the Messiah.”¹ Neander proceeds to point out—and here too his remarks are valuable—that the outward forms of Judaism gave facilities for the formation of such smaller bodies within the general body, by means of the division into synagogues. The Christians, therefore, constituted merely a special synagogue, embraced within the mass of believers who all accepted the law of Moses, all worshipped at the temple of Jerusalem. It will be seen, however, that I differ from Neander in so far as he supposes that the members of the Christian synagogue, in adhering to Judaism, were neglecting any indications given by their founder. On the contrary, it appears to me a more reasonable explanation of their conduct that the founder himself had never contemplated that entire emancipation from Judaic forms which was soon to follow.

On these two points, then—the humanity of Jesus and his Judaism—the early history of the Church affords our position all possible support. How is it about the third—his announcement of a kingdom of

¹ Neander, *Pflanzung der Christlichen Kirche*, vol. i. p. 38.

heaven soon to come? Paul must have derived his doctrine on this point, whatever it was, from those who were disciples of Christ before him, for it does not appear that he had any special revelation on the subject. Let us hear what was the impression made upon his mind by their report of the teaching of Jesus. "We do not wish you to be ignorant, brethren"—so he writes to the Thessalonians—"that you may not grieve like the rest who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, thus also will God bring those who sleep through Jesus. For this we say to you *by the word of the Lord*" (Paul therefore is speaking with all the authority of his apostolic commission), "*that we who are alive and are left for the coming of the Lord* shall not take precedence of those who are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with the word of command, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and are left shall be snatched with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and thus we shall always be with the Lord."¹ Clearer than this it is difficult to be. There can be no question whatever, unless we put an arbitrary significance on these words, that Paul looked for the second coming of Christ and the final judgment long before the existing generation had passed away. Some will fall asleep before that day, but he fully expects that he himself and many of those whom he is addressing will be alive to witness it. So confident is he of this, that he even describes the order in which the faithful will proceed to join their Lord, the dead taking a

¹ 1 Thess. iv. 13-17.

higher rank than the living. He differs from Jesus, and probably from the other apostles, in placing the kingdom of heaven somewhere in the clouds, and not on earth. But he entirely agrees with them as to the date of the revolution. Quite consistent with the above passage is another (of which, however, the correct reading is doubtful) : “We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed.”¹

Filled with the like hope, he prays that the spirit, mind, and *body* of the Thessalonians may be preserved blameless to the coming of Christ.² And he comforts them in a subsequent letter by the promise that they who are troubled shall have “rest with us in the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with the angels of his power.”³ While, in writing to the Corinthians, he speaks of the existing generation as those “upon whom the ends of the ages have come.”⁴

Not less clear is the language of the other apostles. Peter, on that memorable day of Pentecost when the apostles exhibit the gift of tongues, and some irreverent spectators are led to charge them with inebriety, explains to the assembly that the scene which had just been witnessed was characteristic of the “last days,” as foretold by the prophet Joel. In those days their sons and their daughters were to prophesy, their young men to see visions, and their old men to dream dreams; the Spirit was to be poured out on God’s servants and handmaidens; there were to be signs and wonders; blood, fire, and smoke; the sun was to be

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 51. Lachmann reads: πάντες [μέν] κοιμηθησόμεθα, οὐ πάντες δὲ ἀλλαγησόμεθα. The reading of our authorised version seems to me to give far better sense, as also to harmonise better with the apostle’s general doctrine.

² 1 Thess. v. 23.

³ 2 Thess. i. 7.

⁴ 1 Cor. x. 11.

turned into darkness, and the moon into blood ; and whoever called on the name of the Lord was to be saved. Thus Peter, than whom there could be no higher authority as to the mind of Christ, applied to his own time the prophetic description of the “day of the Lord” given by Joel.¹ James exhorts his disciples not to be in too great a hurry for the arrival of Christ. They are to imitate the husbandman waiting for the ripening of his crops. “Be you also patient : confirm your hearts ; for the coming of the Lord draws near.”² The author of the first epistle of Peter distinctly informs the Christian community that “the end of all things is at hand.” And he warns them not to think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try them, “but rejoice, inasmuch as you share in the sufferings of Christ ; that in the revelation of his glory you may also rejoice with exceeding joy.”³ Further on he promises that when the chief Shepherd appears, they shall receive “the unfading crown of glory.”⁴ In the first epistle of John the disciples are thus exhorted : “And now, little children, remain in him, that when he comes we may have boldness, and may not be ashamed before him at his coming.”⁵

In the next chapter he tells them that “when he appears we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.”⁶ Of the Apocalypse it cannot be necessary to speak in detail. The one great thought that inspires it from beginning to end is that of the speedy return of Jesus, accompanied as it will be by the judgment of the wicked, the reward of the faithful, and the establishment of a new heaven and a new earth far

¹ Acts ii. 14-21.

² James v. 7, 8.

³ 1 Pet. iv. 7, 12, 13.

⁴ 1 Pet. v. 4.

⁵ 1 Jo. ii. 28.

⁶ 1 Jo. iii. 2.

more glorious and more beautiful than those that are to pass away. The end of the book is conclusive as to its meaning: "I, Jesus, have sent my angel to testify these things to you in the churches." "He that testifies these things says, 'Surely I come quickly. So be it; come, Lord Jesus.'"¹

There is another passage bearing on this subject, which, as it appears to have been written at a later date than any of those hitherto quoted, may best be considered last. It is found in the second epistle attributed to Peter. The epistle was probably written after the first generation of Christians had passed away, but the forger endeavours to assume the style of the apostle whose name he borrows. From the language he employs it is evident that there was some impatience among believers in his day on account of what seemed to them the long delay in the second coming of Christ. Scoffers had arisen, who were putting the awkward question, "Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation." Such scoffers, he tells them, are to come "in the last days," and he warns them how to resist the influence of their specious arguments. For this purpose he reminds them of the former destruction of the earth by water, and assures them that the present heavens and the present earth are to be destroyed by fire. They are not to let the consideration escape them that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. Hence God is not really slow about fulfilling his promise, as some people believe; he is only waiting

¹ Rev. xxii. 16, 20.

out of kindness, not being willing that any should perish, but desiring that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come unexpectedly, like a thief in the night; wherefore the Christians who are looking for new heavens and a new earth, according to his promise, must take care to be ready that they may be found by him spotless and blameless.¹ Here, then, we have a further proof of the hopes entertained by the early Christians; for this writer, who evidently felt that the promises held out by the original apostles were in danger of being discredited by the long delay in the expected catastrophe, concerns himself to show that the postponement of its arrival is not after all so great as it may seem, and seeks to dispel the doubts that had grown up concerning it. He thus bears important testimony to the nature of the expectations entertained by those who had gone before him.

But even if we had not this epistle, we should find some evidence of the same fact in the writings of the earliest fathers. Thus, in the first epistle of Clement, the Christians are warned in the following language:—

“Far from us be that which is written, ‘Wretched are they who are of a double mind and of a doubting heart;’ who say, ‘These things we have heard even in the times of our fathers; but behold, we have grown old and none of them has happened unto us!’ Ye foolish ones! compare yourselves to a tree; take [for instance] the vine. First of all it sheds its leaves, then it buds, next it puts forth leaves, and then it flowers; after that comes the sour grape, and then follows the ripened fruit. Ye perceive how in a little time the fruit of a tree comes to maturity. Of a

¹ 2 Pet. iii.

truth, soon and suddenly shall his will be accomplished, as the Scripture also bears witness, saying, 'Speedily will he come, and not tarry;' and, 'The Lord shall suddenly come to his temple, even the Holy One, for whom ye look.' " ¹

Further on, the same writer expressly states that what the apostles of Christ preached was the speedy advent of the new order of things. "Having therefore received their orders, and being fully assured by the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, and established in the word of God, with full assurance of the Holy Ghost, they went forth proclaiming that the kingdom of God was at hand." ² Here, then, we have the authority of this very early writer for the statement that such was the view taken of the mission of Jesus by his original disciples.

Again, in the second epistle of Clement, this expression occurs:—"Let us expect, therefore, hour by hour, the kingdom of God in love and righteousness, since we know not the day of the appearing of God." ³ Thus it appears that the apostles received from Jesus, and the early Christians from the apostles, the doctrine that the return of the Messiah in his glory would take place soon.

SUBDIVISION 7.—*What are we to think of him?*

We come now to the most important question of all, namely, what opinion the evidence we possess should lead us to form of the moral character of Jesus, and of the value of his teaching. In considering this subject, we

¹ First Ep. of Clement, ch. xxiii.—A. N. L., vol. i. p. 24.

² Ibid., ch. xli.—A. N. L., vol. i. p. 37.

³ Second Ep. of Clement, ch. xii.—A. N. L., vol. i. p. 62.

are met at the threshold of the inquiry by the extreme difficulty of discarding the traditional view which has gained currency among us. Not only believers in the Christian religion, but freethinkers who look upon Christ as no more than an extraordinary man, have united to utter his praises in no measured terms. His conduct has been supposed to present an ideal of perfection to the human race, and his aphorisms to embody the supreme degree of excellence and of wisdom. Some critics, not being Christians, have even gone so far as to assume that whatever items in his reported language or behaviour seemed to reflect some discredit upon him could not be genuine, but must be due to the imaginations of his disciples.

All this unbounded panegyric naturally raises in the minds of critics who have freed themselves from the accepted tradition a slight prejudice against him, and this may lead them to regard his errors with too unsparing a severity, and to mete out scant justice to the merits he may really possess. No task can be less easy than that of approaching this question with a mind entirely devoid of bias on the one side or on the other. For my own part, I shall endeavour, if I cannot attain perfect impartiality, at least neither to praise nor to blame without adequate reason.

Before proceeding, however, it may be well to state that I shall not attempt to discriminate between the authentic and the unauthentic utterances of Jesus, but shall take for granted that his reporters—excluding the fourth Evangelist—have in the main reported him correctly. No doubt this position is not strictly true. There must be errors, and there may be grave errors in the record, since those who transmitted the language

of their master trusted only to memory. But it is on the whole much more likely that the parables, sermons, and short sayings ascribed to Jesus represent with some approach to fidelity what he really said, than that they, or any considerable proportion of them, were invented by any of his disciples afterwards. They have, moreover, a characteristic flavour which it would have been difficult for a forger to give to the fictitious utterances he might have added to the genuine remains. It is, however, a question of minor import whether the synoptical writers are or are not faithful reporters. Jesus is presented to our admiration by them as the Son of God, and as a pattern of virtue and of wisdom. Therefore, even if we are not criticising a portrait from life, we are at least criticising the ideal portrait which they have held up as an object of worship, and which Christendom has accepted as such.

Omitting (as already considered) those very considerable portions of his doctrine which refer to himself and to his kingdom, we may proceed to the more strictly ethical elements which are to be found scattered about in his instructions to his hearers, sometimes contained in those striking parables which, following the habit of his nation, he was fond of relating; sometimes in the short, clear, and incisive sentences of which he was a master. In considering the value and originality of his views, it will be of advantage to compare them, where we can, with those of other great teachers of mankind.

Perhaps one of the most conspicuous peculiarities is his fondness for impressive contrasts. He takes peculiar pleasure in contemplating the reversal of things and arrangements. The first are to be last;

the humble exalted; the poor preferred to the rich; the meanest to become the greatest, and so forth. Strangely similar to this favourite idea, so continually making its appearance in his moral forecasts, is the language frequently used by his Chinese predecessor Laó-tsé, who in more than one respect greatly resembles him. Thus Jesus tells his disciples that he who is greatest among them shall be their servant, and that he who exalts himself shall be abased, while he who humbles himself shall be exalted.¹ Elsewhere he declares that if any man desire to be first, he shall be last, and servant of all.² Presenting a child, to render his lesson the more impressive, he tells them that he who humbles himself like this little child is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.³ Exactly in the same tone Laó-tsé observes that "the holy man places himself behind, and comes to the front; neglects himself, and is preserved."⁴ Heaven, according to the same sage, does precisely as Jesus expects his Father to do in the kingdom of heaven. "It lowers the high, it raises the low. The way of heaven is to diminish what is superfluous, to complete what is deficient. The way of man is not this; he diminishes what is deficient to add it to what is superfluous."⁵

On the same subject of humility, an opinion of the philosopher Mang, or Mencius, may be compared with one of Christ's. There was a strife among the disciples of the latter which should be accounted the greatest. Christ said: "The kings of the earth have dominion over them, and they who have authority over them are called benefactors. But be not you so: but let

¹ Mt. xxiii. 10, 11. ² Mk. ix. 35. ³ Mt. xviii. 4. ⁴ T. t. k., ch. vii.

⁵ T. t. k., ch. lxxvii.

the greater among you be as the younger, and he that leads as he that serves.”¹ Now Mang in like manner warns his disciples against the craving for authority. “Mencius said: ‘The superior man has three things in which he delights, and to be ruler over the empire is not one of them. That his father and mother are both alive, and that the condition of his brothers affords no cause for anxiety;—this is one delight. That, when looking up, he has no occasion for shame before heaven; and below, he has no occasion to blush before men;—this is a second delight. That he can get from the whole empire the most talented individuals, and teach and nourish them;—this is the third delight. The superior man has three things in which he delights, and to be ruler over the empire is not one of them.’”² This definition of the pleasures of the high-minded man is quite equal of its kind to anything that has been said on the same subject by Jesus. It is true that Mang ranges over a somewhat wider field, and that therefore the sentences just quoted do not admit of exact comparison with anything coming from Jesus. But while both agree in reprobating the desire to exercise power, Mang goes beyond Jesus in proposing to substitute other interests for that of political ambition. And these interests are of the best kind. His “superior man” rejoices in the prosperity of his family, in the consciousness of his innocence of any disgraceful conduct, and in his opportunities of teaching those who are most worthy of his instructions and most likely to carry on his work. The latter is a pleasure which is rarely mentioned, and it shows much thoughtfulness on the part

¹ Lu. xxii. 25, 26.

² Mang, vii. 1, 20.—C. C., vol. ii. p. 334.

of the philosopher to have upheld it as an object in life.

Curiously enough, another Chinese sage has anticipated another of the best points in the doctrine of Jesus. Jesus enjoined his hearers not to practise charity in a public and ostentatious manner, like the hypocrites, "but when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth."¹ In this admirable maxim he would have had the support of all true Confucians, for one of their canonical writers had also told them that "it is the way of the superior man to prefer the concealment of his virtue, while it daily becomes more illustrious, and it is the way of the mean man to seek notoriety, while he daily goes more and more to ruin."²

On another question, that of the admonition of an erring friend, Jesus gave an opinion which is in perfect accord with an opinion given by Confucius. If a man's brother trespass against him, he is first, according to Jesus, to take him to task in private; should that fail, to call in two or three witnesses to hear the charge; and should the offender still be obdurate, to inform the Church.³ If his impenitence continue even after this, he is to become to him "as a heathen and a publican."⁴ Turning to the conversations of Confucius, we find the following:—"Tsze-kung asked about friendship. The Master said, 'Faithfully admonish your friend, and kindly try to lead him. If you find him impracticable, stop. Do not disgrace

¹ Mt. vi. 3.

² C. C., i. 295.—Chung Yung, ch. xxxiii. 1.

³ The use of this word casts suspicion on the authenticity of the verse where it occurs.

⁴ Mt. xviii. 15-17.

yourself.' ”¹ The steps inculcated by the two teachers are, making allowance for difference of country, almost identical.

The thoughts as well as the language of Jesus are often reproduced with singular fidelity in the sacred works of Buddhists. As the Buddha is, on the whole, the prophet whose character approaches most closely to that of Jesus, so we are almost certain to find in the literature of Buddhism nearly all the most exalted features of his ethical teaching. Thus Jesus praises the poor widow who contributes her mite to the temple treasury, because she had given all that she had. In one of the numerous legends supposed to have been related by Sakyamuni an exactly similar incident occurs. A former Buddha was travelling through various countries, accompanied by his attendant monks. The rich householders presented them with all kinds of food as offerings. A poor man, who had no property whatever, and lived by collecting wood in the mountains and selling it, had gained two coins by the pursuit of his industry. Perceiving the Buddha coming from a visit to the royal palace, he devoutly gave him these two coins ; his sole possession in the world. The Buddha received them, and mercifully remembered the donor, who (as Sakyamuni now explained) was richly rewarded during ninety-one subsequent ages.² The widow's mite is no less closely reflected in the following anecdote from the same collection. In the time of a former Buddha, a certain monk belonging to his train had gone out to collect the offerings of the pious. He arrived at the hut of a miserable couple, who had nothing between them

¹ Lun Yu, b. xii. ch. 33.—C. C., i. 125. ² W. u. Th., p. 53.

but an old piece of cotton-wool. When the husband went out to beg, the wife sat at home naked in the hay; and when the wife went out, the husband remained in the same condition. To these people then the monk approached, crying out as usual, "Go and prostrate yourselves before Buddha! present him with gifts!" It happened that the wife was wearing the cotton-wool on this occasion. She therefore requested the holy man to wait a little, promising to return. Hereupon she entered the house and requested the permission of her husband to offer the cotton-wool to Buddha. He, however, pointed out that as they had not the smallest property beyond this, extreme inconvenience would result from the loss of it, for both of them must then remain at home. To this she replied that they must needs die in any case, and that their hopes for the future would be much improved if they died after presentation of an offering. She then returned to the monk, and requested him to turn away his eyes a moment. But he told her to give her alms openly in her hands, and that he would then recite a benediction over them. The full delicacy of her situation had now to be explained. "Except this cotton-wool stuff on my body I have nothing, and no other clothing; since, then, it would be improper for thee to behold the foul-smelling impurity of the female body, I will reach thee out the stuff from within." So saying she retired into the house and handed out her garment. When the monk delivered it to Buddha, it caused great offence to the king's courtiers, who surrounded him, on account of its being old and dirty. But Buddha, who knew their thoughts, said, "I find, that

of all the gifts of this assembly, no single one surpasses this in cleanliness and purity.”¹

Not only in the case of the widow at the treasury did Jesus dwell upon the value of even trifling gifts made for the sake of religion. Another time he declared to those about him that whoever gave them a cup of cold water in his name, because they belonged to Christ, would not lose his reward. In Buddhist story the very same ideas are to be found; almost the same words. An eminent member of the Buddha’s circle says that “whoever with a purely-believing heart offers nothing but a handful of water, or presents so much to the spiritual assembly or to his parents, or gives drink therewith to the poor and needy, or to a beast of the field;—this meritorious action will not be exhausted in many ages.”²

The simile of fishing for men, employed by Jesus in his summons to Simon and Andrew, is likewise to be discovered in the works of the great Asiatic religion. The images of the Boddhisattvas, or Buddhas yet to come, frequently hold in their hands a snare, which is thus explained in the *Nippon Pantheon*:—“He disseminates upon the ocean of birth and decay the Lotus-flower of the excellent law as bait; with the loop of devotion, never cast out in vain, he brings living beings up like fishes, and carries them to the other side of the river, where there is true understanding.”³ And in the book from which some illustrations have already been taken, it is said of a believer that “he had been seized by the hook of the doctrine, just as a fish, who has taken the line, is securely pulled out.”⁴

¹ W. u. Th., p. 150

² Ibid., p. 37.

³ B. T., p. 213.

⁴ W. u. Th., p. 114.

Hitherto we have noticed a few of the minor points in the doctrine of Jesus, and while there has been little in these to object to, there has also been little to excite excessive admiration. The extreme exaltation of humility, and the evident anxiety to see, not equality of conditions, but a reversal of the actual inequalities, are not among the best features of his ideal system. We cannot but suspect something of a personal bias. Thus, in the parable of the Pharisee and the publican, aimed at a hostile and detested order, the publican is justified by nothing but his humility; while in that of Lazarus and Dives, Lazarus is eternally rewarded for nothing but his poverty. It is no doubt well to be humble, and we should be glad to see poverty removed; but it is not to be assumed that the Pharisee, conscious of leading an honourable life, is therefore a bad man; nor that the rich proprietor should be tormented in hell merely because he does not give alms to all the beggars who throng about his gates. When Jesus desires that virtuous actions should be done as quietly and even as secretly as possible, he inculcates an important principle of morals, and it is devoutly to be wished that we had among us more of this unobtrusive kindness, and less ostentatious charity. Where, however, he preaches on the virtue of bestowing alms on his disciples, he does but echo a sentiment which is natural to religious teachers in all ages, and to which, as we have seen, the emissaries of another and earlier faith, were equally alive. Passing from these comparatively trifling questions, let us consider some of his decisions on the greater moral problems with which he felt called upon to deal.

On a vast social subject—that of divorce—he pro-

nounced an opinion which gives us a little insight into his mode of regarding that most important of all topics, the relations of the sexes. The Pharisees, it appears, came to him and asked him whether it was permissible for a man to put away his wife, Moses having allowed it. Jesus explained that this precept had been given for the hardness of their hearts. His own view was, that man and wife are one flesh, and that if either should leave the other, except on account of unfaithfulness, and marry again, that one would be guilty of adultery. This severe doctrine he supported by one of his short sayings: "What God hath joined together, let not man put asunder."¹ But surely this judgment assumes the very point at issue. The joining together in wedlock is ascribed to God; the putting asunder to man. But granting the sacredness of the marriage tie, it would still be no less possible to invoke the divine sanction for its dissolution than for its original formation. And in many instances the maxim might be exactly reversed. So unfortunate is the result of many marriages, that it would be easy for a religious reformer to say of them, with perfect sincerity, "What man hath joined together, let God put asunder." There is, in fact, almost as much to be said on moral grounds for the divorce of unhappy couples as for the marriage of happy ones. Nor does Jesus by any means face the real difficulties of the question by allowing divorce where either of the parties has been guilty of adultery. This, no doubt, is the extreme case, and if divorce is not to be given here, it can be given

¹ Mk. x. 1-12; Mt. xix. 1-12, and v. 31, 32.

nowhere. But why is adultery to be the sole ground of separation? Why is an institution which may bring so much happiness to mankind to be converted into one of the most fertile sources of human misery? Why, when both parties to the contract desire separation, is an external authority, whether that of opinion or of law, to enforce union? None of these questions appear to have presented themselves to the mind of Jesus. Supposing even that his decision were right, he assigns no reasons for it, but simply lays down the law in a trenchant manner, without giving us the least clue to the process by which he arrived at so strange a conclusion. Nor is it in the least likely that the many perplexities encompassing this, and all other questions affecting the morals of sex, had ever troubled him. His mind was not sufficiently subtle to enter into them; and thus it is that, throughout the whole course of his career, he lays down no single doctrine (if we except this one on divorce) which can be of the smallest service to his disciples in the many practical troubles that must beset their lives from the existence of a natural passion of which he takes no account.

Another weak point in the system of Jesus is his aversion to wealth and wealthy men, apart from the consideration of the good or bad use they may make of their property. Thus, the only advice he gives to the rich man who had kept all the commandments was to sell everything he had and give the proceeds to the poor; a measure of very questionable advantage to those for whose benefit it is intended. When the man naturally

declined to take this course—practically a mere throwing off of the responsibilities of life—Jesus remarked that it was hard for those who had riches to enter the kingdom of God. Seeing the amazement of his disciples, he emphasised his doctrine by adding that it was easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter that kingdom. Hereupon his disciples, “excessively astonished,” asked who then could be saved, and Jesus left a loophole for the salvation of the rich by the declaration that, impossible as it might be for men to pass a camel through a needle’s eye, all things are possible with God.¹ A like *animus* against the wealthier classes is evinced in the story of the king who invited a number of guests to a wedding festivity. Those who had received invitations made light of them, one going to his farm, another to his merchandise, and so forth; or, according to another version, alleging their worldly affairs as excuses. Seeing that they would not come, the king bade his servants go out into the highways, and bring in whomsoever they might find; or, as Luke puts it, the poor, the maimed, the halt, and the blind.²

More indiscriminately still is this aversion to the rich expressed in the parable of Lazarus and Dives. Here we are not told that the great proprietor had been a bad man, or had acted with any unusual selfishness. The utmost we may infer from the language used about him is that

¹ Mk. x. 17-27.

² Mt. xxii. 1-10; Lu. xiv. 16-24.

he had not been sufficiently sensitive to the difference between his own condition and that of the beggar. But no positive unkindness is even hinted at. Nor had the beggar done anything to merit reward. He had only led one of those idle and worthless lives of dependence on others which are too common among Southern nations. Yet in the future life the beggar appears to be rewarded merely because in this life he had been badly off; and the rich man is punished merely because he had been well off.¹ A stronger instance of apparently irrational prejudice it would be difficult to find.

In connection with these notions about wealth there is a curious theory of social intercourse deserving to be considered. Jesus has expressed it thus: "When thou makest a supper or a dinner, do not invite thy friends, or thy brothers, or thy relations, or thy rich neighbours, lest they also should invite thee in return, and thou shouldst have a recompense. But when thou makest a feast, invite the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind; and thou shalt be blessed because they have not the means of making thee a recompense. For thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just."² Nobody can object to charitable individuals asking poor people or invalids without rank to dinner at their houses; indeed, it is to be wished that the practice were more common than it is. But we cannot admit that this kind action ought to be rendered obli-

¹ Lu. xvi. 19-25.

² Lu. xiv. 12-14.

gatory, to the exclusion of other modes of conduct. Society, properly speaking, cannot exist except by reciprocity. That sort of friendly intercourse between equals which constitutes society implies giving and taking; and it is eminently desirable that we should do exactly what Christ would forbid us doing, namely, invite our neighbours and be invited by them as circumstances may require. The fear that we may receive a recompense for the dinner-parties we may give is surely chimerical. Pleasantness and mutual advantage are alike promoted by this reciprocity, which, moreover, avoids the discomfort produced when the obligation is wholly on one side. Jesus, in fact, overlooks entirely the more intellectual side of society, and dwells exclusively on the moral side. What he wishes to establish, is not converse between men, but charity. So that a person acting on his views would be excluded from the society of those who might benefit him either materially or morally, and would be confined to those whom he might benefit. Such an arrangement would not in the end be good either for the benefactors or the benefited.

His conceptions of justice are seemingly not more perfect than his conceptions of social arrangements. The parable of the labourers is intended to justify the deity in assigning equal rewards to those who have borne unequal burdens, and also to illustrate his doctrine that the first will be last, and the last first. A householder hires a number of labourers to work in his vine-

yard; some of whom he engages in the morning, others later in the day, others towards its close. All of them receive a denarium in payment, though some had worked the whole day, and others only an hour. At this result the class which had worked the longer time grumble; but the householder defends himself by appealing to the strict terms of his contract, by which he had bound himself to give the same wages to all.¹ No doubt the labourers who had borne the burden and heat of the day had no *legal* standing-point for their complaint; but the sentiment that prompted it was none the less a just one. Granting the validity of the master's plea that he had honourably fulfilled his bargain, it may still be urged that the bargain itself was not of an equitable character. Plainly, a sum which is adequate pay for an hour, is inadequate for ten or twelve; and that which is sufficient for a day is excessive for an evening. And the same argument applies to a future state. If, as is so often urged, it is to be a compensation for the sufferings of this state, then it ought to bear some proportion to those sufferings. But how can this be effected? Jesus saw the difficulty, and endeavoured, but not successfully, to meet it by this parable.

But the imperfection of his sense of justice is nowhere more conspicuously shown than in the conduct he ascribes to God. To recur again

¹ Mt. xx. 1-16.

to the case of Lazarus and Dives. Not only is the rich man punished with frightful torture, but his humble and kindly request that Lazarus might be allowed to warn his five brothers of their possible fate is met with a peremptory refusal. The only reason alleged for this cruelty is that they have Moses and the prophets, who certainly did not inform them that the mere possession of wealth or enjoyment of luxury was punished by everlasting misery.¹ In other places, too, the horrible doctrine of unending punishment is asserted by Jesus, and all the efforts of his modern disciples will not explain away this fact. The tares are to be bound up in bundles to be burnt. The wicked are to be cast into a furnace of fire, where there will be wailing and gnashing of teeth.² It is better to enter into life mutilated than to be thrown un mutilated into the fire³ of hell which is never quenched.⁴ The servant who had made no money by usury is cast into outer darkness.⁵ The righteous go into eternal life; the wicked to eternal punishment.⁶ Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost cannot be forgiven, but involves eternal damnation.⁷ It is almost needless to observe that no wickedness could ever justify punishment without an end; that is, punishment for punishment's sake; and that the creation of human beings whose existence *terminated* in torture would be itself a far more terrible crime than any which the basest of mankind can ever commit.

There is one more point as to which his teaching

¹ Lu. xvi. 27-31.

³ Mt. xviii. 8, 9.

⁶ Mt. xxv. 46.

² Mt. xiii. 30, 42, 50.

⁴ Mk. ix. 43-46.

⁷ Mk. iii. 29.

Mt. xxv. 30.

will not bear investigation. It is the doctrine of the power of prayer. He tells his hearers, in the most absolute manner, that they will receive whatever they may ask in prayer provided they believe.¹ Faith is the grand and sole condition of the accomplishment of all desires. This is the explanation of the withered fig-tree. It was faith that had wrought the change. By faith the disciples might effect not only such matters as the destruction of fig-trees, but far more stupendous miracles.² This is the explanation of the disciples' failure with the lunatic child. It was owing to their want of faith. Had they but faith as a grain of mustard seed—so Jesus told them—they would be able to say to a mountain, "Remove hence thither," and it would be removed. Nothing would be impossible to them.³ And if they had faith themselves, if they really believed in their master's words, and ever attempted the experiment of working such transformations in nature, they must have experienced the bitter disappointment so graphically described by the authoress of "Joshua Davidson" in the case of that sincere Christian. But short of this extreme trial of the power of faith over matter, many generations of pious believers will bear sad witness to the fact that they have asked many things in prayer which they have *not* received; not least among the number being moral excellence, which they have but imperfectly attained. Yet this, it would seem, might be the most easily granted without interference with the

¹ Mk. xi. 24 ; Mt. xxi. 22.² Mt. xxi. 19-21.³ Mt. xvii. 20.

physical universe. And if it be pleaded that no Christian has ever really succeeded in acquiring the degree of faith required to move mountains, what becomes of the promise of Jesus? Is it not a mere form of words, depending for its truth on a condition which human nature never can fulfil?

The opinions of Jesus on the question of the lawfulness of the tribute, and his reply to the Sadducean difficulty about due adjustment of matrimonial relations in a future state, have been already noticed. Neither of these decisions, it has been shown, can be regarded as evincing wisdom or depth of thought. On the other hand, his answer to the scribe who asked him which was the first commandment fully deserves the approbation which his questioner bestowed. After this, remarks the Evangelist triumphantly, no man dared to interrogate him. Passing from these isolated judgments, let us consider now the fullest exposition to be found anywhere of the moral system of Jesus,—the so-called Sermon on the Mount.¹ As reported by Matthew, this is a vast collection of precepts on many different subjects, delivered no doubt on many different occasions. Taken together, they contain the concentrated essence of his teaching, and offer therefore the fairest field for discussion and criticism. He opens his discourse with a series of blessings, in which his extreme fondness for contrasting the present with the future order is markedly exhibited. Those whom he selects as the objects of benediction are the poor in spirit; mourners; the meek; those who hunger and thirst after righteousness; the merciful; the pure in heart; the peacemakers; those who are persecuted for right-

¹ Mt. v.—vii. inclusive.

eousness' sake ; the disciples when reviled, persecuted, and unjustly accused. Of the nine classes of those who are thus blessed, five are composed of those whose present condition makes them objects of pity, and who are consoled with the assurance that they shall be rewarded in the kingdom of heaven. After this, the followers of Jesus are admonished that they are the salt of the earth, and that they must cause their light to shine before men. This is followed by that remarkable declaration (already noticed) as to the permanence of the law, and by a warning that, if they wished to enter the kingdom of heaven, their righteousness must exceed that of those odious people, the scribes and Pharisees.

Hereupon Jesus takes up three great commandments—not to kill, not to commit adultery, not to commit perjury—and proceeds to expand their meaning beyond the literal signification of the words. Thus, it had been said, “Thou shalt not kill.” But he says, that whoever is angry with his brother shall be liable to the judgment; that whoever says “Raka”¹ to his brother shall be liable to the Sanhedrim; but that whoever says “Fool,” shall be liable to hell, or literally, to “the gehenna of fire.” The punishment is of undue severity in proportion to the offence; but when, in the following verses, Jesus insists on the importance of doing justice to men before performing religious obligations, he speaks in the truest spirit of humanity. Proceeding to the

¹ From the Hebrew רֵק or רָק, a word meaning empty; and (applied to persons) an empty, vain fellow. It is used of the “vain and light persons” whom Abimelech hired (Judges ix. 4), and of David by Michal when he uncovered himself before the maid-servants.

commandment not to commit adultery, he enjoins an excess of self-discipline. It is *not* desirable to pluck out the right eye and cut off the right hand because they offend us, though it is well to train them to obey the higher faculties. The argument of Jesus rests only on the assumption that the sinful members, if not destroyed by such violent measures as this, may land the whole body in hell. Dealing next with the question of oaths, he enlarges the prohibition of perjury into a prohibition of all swearing whatsoever, assigning the strangest reasons for avoiding the employment, when taking oaths, of the names of various objects. They are not to swear by heaven, because it is God's throne; nor by the earth, because it is his footstool; nor by Jerusalem, because it is the city of the great king; nor by the head, because we cannot make a single hair black or white. Granting even that the advice is good, what is to be said of these reasons? What would be thought of a Member of Parliament using an exactly parallel argument: namely, that it is wrong to swear by the New Testament, because the person taking the oath cannot make a single type larger or smaller?

The theory embodied in the following verses occupies so cardinal a place in the philosophy of Jesus, that in order to do him justice they must be quoted at length. "You have heard that it has been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth. But I tell you not to resist evil; but whoever shall smite thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. And as for him who wishes to sue thee, and take thy coat, give him thy cloak also. And whoever shall compel thee to go

one mile, go two with him. Give to him that asketh thee ; and turn not away from him that wishes to borrow of thee. You have heard that it has been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, and pray for them who persecute you, that you may be sons of your father in heaven ; for he causes his sun to rise on bad and good, and sends rain on just and unjust.”¹

Perhaps there is no single point in the moral teaching of Jesus which has been more celebrated than this. It is thought to represent the very acme of perfection, and Christianity takes credit to itself for the embodiment of so magnificent a doctrine in its moral system. And certainly the words of Jesus are so sublime as almost to extort admiration and disarm criticism. Nor would it at all detract from his merits if the principle here laid down should turn out to be no new discovery of his own, but one already reached by great teachers in other lands ; for it was through him that it was made known to the Jews of his own age, and thus to the whole of Christendom. Moreover, we cannot suppose that he had ever heard of those who had anticipated the sentiments, and almost the words, of these beautiful sentences in the Sermon on the Mount. Nevertheless, these anticipations exist ; and whatever glory this rule may confer on the religion of Christ must belong equally, and even by prior right, to the religion of Lao-tsze and the religion of Buddha. Thus Lao-tsze says, “Return enmity by doing good.”² Or again, “I treat the good man well ; the man who is not good I also treat well.”³ The very perfection of patience under injustice, extending to the

¹ Mt. v. 38-45.

² T. t. k., 63.

³ Ibid., 49.

length of blessing those who curse, and turning the other cheek to those who smite the one—is exhibited in the old Buddhistic legend of Purna. Purna is a convert who spontaneously betakes himself as a missionary to a savage nation. The Buddha asks him what he will do if they address him in coarse and insolent language. He replies that he will consider them good and gentle people not to strike him with their fists or stone him. Should they strike him with their fists or stone him, he will still think them good and gentle neither to strike him with sticks or swords; should they strike him with sticks or swords, he will equally praise them for not killing him; should they even kill him, he will still say, “They are certainly good people, they are certainly gentle people, they who deliver me with so little pain from this body full of impurity.”¹ This is certainly a most consistent application of the principle of non-resistance to evil, and of loving one’s enemies. No Christian saint or martyr could have followed his master’s precepts more faithfully than this Buddhist apostle. But whether those precepts admit of general adoption into the scheme of human morals is a much more difficult question than whether in occasional instances here and there they have led to admirable conduct. Let us call in another Chinese philosopher to our assistance on this point.

The doctrine of returning good for evil, proclaimed, as we have seen, by Lao-tsze, was thus dealt with by his great rival, Confucius. “Some one said, ‘What do you say concerning the principle that injury should be recompensed with kindness?’ The Master said,

¹ II. B. I., p. 253.

‘With what, then, will you recompense kindness? Recompense injury with justice, and recompense kindness with kindness.’ ” How shall we decide between these authorities? None can question the nobility of the conduct enjoined by Jesus in certain instances. There are cases where the return of good for evil, of blessing for cursing, of benevolence for persecution, is not only the highest practicable virtue, but also the best punishment of the evil-doers. Nevertheless, there is great force in the observations of Confucius. If we are to reward injury by kindness, how are we to reward kindness? Is there to be no difference made between those who do us good and those who do us harm? To so pertinent a question we are compelled to answer that the practical results of such conduct on our part would be simply disastrous. Unkindness would not receive its natural and appropriate penalty, nor kindness its natural and appropriate reward. Not only should we ourselves be losers by our failure to resist injustice, but the worst classes of mankind would receive by that non-resistance a powerful stimulus to evil. Imagine, for example, that, instead of opposing an extortionate claim, we give up our cloak also to the man who wishes to take our coat. Plainly such conduct can have but one result. We shall become the victims of extortionate claims, and our property will be squandered among the undeserving instead of being kept for better uses. Or suppose that persecution for the sake of our opinions, instead of being met with armed resistance, wherever that resistance is likely to be successful, is received only with blessings showered on the heads of the oppressors; without doubt, the hands of the persecuting party will be strengthened,

and liberty, which is everywhere the result of resisting evil, will never be established. The freedom we ourselves enjoy, both as a nation in respect of other nations, and as individuals in respect of our domestic government, is the consequence of acting on a principle the direct reverse of that laid down by Jesus. Our ancestors, who were good Christians but much better patriots, would have been amazed indeed at any attempt to persuade them to turn the left cheek to him who smote them on the right. A doctrine more convenient for the purposes of tyrants and malefactors of every description it would be difficult to invent.

At the same time it must be conceded that there is in it some truth, provided we discriminate between fitting and unfitting occasions for its application. It is not the violent man who assaults us, the unscrupulous man who sues us, or the persecutor who tramples on our freedom, who should be met by a benevolent return. But there are offences of so personal a nature, affecting our individual interest so largely, and the public interest so slightly, that the best way of dealing with them may often be not to resent them, but to receive them with unruffled gentleness. Each person must judge for himself what are the cases to which this possibility applies. But the guiding rule in thus acting must be that we expect by thus returning good for evil to soften the heart of him who has done us wrong, and, in the language of Paul to "heap coals of fire on his head." Should the effect be simply to relieve him from the penalty of our resentment without inducing him to change his course, we shall have done him a moral injury and society a material injury, and the probability or improbability

of such a result should be measured in deciding upon the conduct to be pursued. Properly guarded, and borne in mind as the occasional exception, by no means as the rule, the return of injustice or ill-will by benevolence and kindly feeling may be of the utmost value, both in cultivating the best emotions in those who practise it, and in calling forth the repentance of those towards whom it is practised; but as a universal and absolute principle it must be utterly rejected. Lao-tsze and Jesus when they affirmed it undoubtedly struck one of the highest notes in human nature. Yet it must be granted that Khung-tsze took a wider view, and that his injunction to recompense injury with justice, and kindness with kindness, is more consistent with a philosophic regard for the interests of mankind, and with a practicable scheme of social ethics.

Jesus proceeds to enjoin his disciples neither to give alms, nor to pray, nor to fast in an ostentatious manner; and in connection with this excellent advice he teaches them the short prayer which has become so famous under his name. The clauses of this prayer may be worth some consideration. It begins with a formula of adoration addressed to "Our father in heaven." Then follows a petition full of meaning to Jesus and those to whom he imparted it, but of little or no signification in the mouths of the millions of modern Christians who daily repeat it: "Thy kingdom come." Jesus hoped, and his disciples caught the hope, that God's kingdom would come very soon; and this prayer was a request for the early realisation of the glories of that kingdom. Those who then employed it believed that at any moment it might

be granted, and that at no distant period it certainly would be granted. "Thy will be done, as in heaven so also on earth;" a clause embodying the popular conception of another region in which God's will is perfectly obeyed, while here it is met by some counter-acting influence. "Give us this day our daily bread," for beyond the daily provision they were not to look; a doctrine which we shall notice shortly. "And forgive us our debts" (or, in Luke, our sins) "as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." Passing over the singular conception of God as leading men into temptation, let us rather notice the preceding petition, on which Jesus himself has supplied a commentary, that we may be forgiven, as we forgive others. In reference to this he tells his hearers, that if they forgive men their trespasses, their heavenly father will forgive theirs; and that if they do not thus behave, neither will he. A kindred doctrine is laid down in the beginning of the next chapter, where he tells them not to judge, that they may not be judged; that with what measure they mete, it shall be measured to them again. And this is illustrated in another place by the parable of a servant who, having been excused from the immediate payment of a large debt by his master, refused to excuse a fellow-servant from the payment of a small one; whereupon his master flew into a passion, and "delivered him to the tormentors."¹ There is an apparent justice and a real emotional satisfaction in the harsh treatment of those who are harsh themselves. But we must not be misled by the immediate gratification we experience at the

¹ Mt. xviii. 23-35.

punishment of the unforgiving servant, supposing that it is right to mete out to each man the measure he metes out to others. Assuredly it does not follow that because a man is unjust or cruel, he should be treated with injustice or cruelty himself. Either it is right to forgive a man's sins, or it is not. If right, then his own harshness in refusing forgiveness to another is one of the sins which should be forgiven. If not right, then neither that nor any other offence should be forgiven by the supreme dispenser of justice. For what reason should the one crime of not forgiving those who trespass against us be selected for a punishment of such extraordinary severity, while it is implied that the penalty of other and graver crimes may by God's mercy be remitted? The fact is, that Jesus is misled by a false analogy between the conduct of one man towards another, in a case where he is personally concerned, and the conduct of a judge towards criminals. Offences against morality are treated as personal offences against God, who has therefore the same right to forgive them as a creditor has to excuse his debtor from payment. But in a perfect system of justice, human or divine, there could be no question of forgiveness at all. Every violation of the law would bring its appropriate penalty, *and no more*. The penalty being thus proportioned to the offence, there could be no question of that sort of "forgiveness" which implies a suspicion that it is, or may be, too severe. No doubt, the temper of the offender, and the probability of his repeating the crime, would be elements to be considered in awarding the sentence. But it must always be borne in mind that either the hope of complete pardon, or the threat

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of a punishment far heavier than is needed to deter, equally tend to neutralise the effects of our system of justice. And thus it has been in Christendom. The threat of everlasting torture, accompanied with the expectation of complete forgiveness, has been less efficacious than would have been the most moderate of earthly penalties, provided they had been certain. But Jesus was encumbered with a system in which there were no gradations. Thus he represents the deity now as extending complete forgiveness to sins which should have received their fitting retribution; now as visiting with immoderate severity offences for which more lenient measures would have amply sufficed.

Proceeding to another subject, the speaker dwells upon the comparative unimportance of terrestrial affairs. He advises men not to lay up treasure on earth, but in heaven, for where their treasure is, there will their heart be also; and he goes on to say, "Take no thought for your life what you shall eat or what you shall drink, nor for your body what you shall put on. Is not the life more than nourishment, and the body than raiment? Look at the birds of the sky, for they sow not, neither do they reap nor gather into barns, and your heavenly father feeds them. Are you not much better than they? And which of you by taking thought can add a single cubit to his stature? And why do you take thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, they toil not, neither do they spin: and I say to you that not even Solomon in all his glory was clothed like one of these. And if God so clothe the grass of the field which exists to-day and to-morrow

is cast into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?" Therefore his disciples are to take no thought about eating, drinking, or clothing (as the Gentiles do), for their heavenly father knows that they have need of these things. They are to seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and these will be added. They are to take no thought for the morrow, but let the morrow take thought for itself.¹ Upon which extraordinary argument it would have been interesting to ask a few questions. In the first place, how did Jesus suppose it had happened that men had in fact come to trouble themselves about food, drink, and clothing? Did he imagine that an inherent pleasure in labour had driven them to do so? Would he not rather have been compelled to admit that, not by any choice of their own, but just because their heavenly father had *not* provided these things in the requisite abundance, they had been forced to "take thought" for the morrow; all their primitive inclinations notwithstanding? Every tendency of human nature would have prompted men to take no thought either for food or raiment, had not hunger and cold brought vividly before them the necessity of doing so. But for this they would only have been too glad to live like the birds of the air or the lilies of the field. But let us examine a little more closely the reasoning of Jesus. Birds neither sow nor reap; God feeds them; therefore he will feed us without sowing or reaping. A more unfortunate illustration of the care of Providence for his creatures it would be difficult to find. Was Jesus ignorant of the fact that he feeds some

¹ Mt. vi. 25-34

birds upon others whom they seize on as their prey, and these again upon an inferior class of animals? So that, if he is careful of the hawk, it is at the expense of the dove; and if he is careful of the sparrow, it is at the expense of the worm. Cannibalism, or at least a recourse to wild animals as the only obtainable diet, must have been the logical results of the doctrine of Jesus. Not less singular would be the effects of his teaching as to clothes. The lily which remains in a state of nature is more beautifully arrayed than was Solomon. Granted; but does it therefore follow that we are to imitate the lily? We might agree with Jesus that nudity, alike in flowers and in human beings, is more beautiful than the most superb dressing; yet there are conveniences in clothes which may even justify taking a little thought in order to obtain them, and those who really omit to do this are generally the lowest types of the human race. That God would not give us clothing if we ourselves made no effort to obtain it, is not only admitted, but almost asserted, in the argument of Jesus; for he refers us to the grass of the field, which remains in its natural condition, as an example of the kind of raiment which our heavenly father provides. So absurd are these precepts, that no body of Christians has ever attempted to act upon them. Some there have been, indeed, who took no thought for the morrow, and who never exerted themselves to procure the necessities of life. But then they lived in the midst of societies where these things were provided by the labour of others, and where they well knew that their pious indolence would not leave them a prey to hunger, but

would rather stimulate the charitable zeal of their more secular brethren.

After laying down the rule against judging others, which has been already referred to, Jesus gives the excellent advice to those who would pull the mote out of their brother's eye to attend first to the beam in their own. This is followed by the proverbial warning not to cast pearls before swine. A singular passage succeeds, in which the doctrine is broadly stated that whatever men desire of God they are to ask it, "for every one who asks receives, and he who seeks finds." And it is added, that as they give their children good gifts, so their heavenly father gives good things to those who ask him. But what of those who do not ask him? Does he, like an unwise human parent, give most to those who are the loudest in their petitions, neglecting the humble or retiring children who make no noise? These verses allow us no option but to suppose that Jesus thought he did, and this inference receives strong confirmation from the parable of the unjust judge, who yielded to clamour what he would not give from a sense of justice,¹ as also from the illustration of the man who was wearied by the importunity of his friend into doing what he would not have done for the sake of friendship.² In the former case, the parable is related for the express purpose of showing "that men ought always to pray and not to faint;" in the latter, the illustration is given in connection with the very verses which we are now criticising. There is, then, no escape from the conclusion that the conceptions Jesus had of the deity

¹ Lu. xviii. 1-5.

² Lu. xi. 5-9.

were of a nature to lead to the belief that God might be worried by continual prayer into concessions and favours which would not otherwise have been granted.

Excepting a single verse, the remainder of the sermon is occupied with a warning that the way to life is narrow, that to destruction broad; with a caution against false prophets, and a very fine description of the future rejection from heaven of many who have made loud professions of religion, and contrariwise, of the reception of those who have done their father's will, and whom he likens to one who has built his house upon the solid rock as distinguished from one who has built it on the sand. One verse, however, remains, and that not only the most important in the whole of this discourse, but ethically the most important in the whole of its author's system. That verse is the well-known commandment: "All things whatsoever you may wish men to do to you, thus also do you to them. For this is the law and the prophets."¹ Whether Jesus perceived that in this brief sentence he was enunciating the cardinal principle of all morality is of necessity uncertain. But from the addition of the phrase "this is the law and the prophets," it is probable that he regarded it as a summary of the moral teachings of the religion he professed. If so, he has rightly laid the foundation of scientific ethics. Utilitarians, who believe that the object of morality is human happiness, may claim him (as one of them has already done) as the father of their system. While Kant, who gives the fundamental law, so to act that the rule of your conduct

¹ Mt. vii. 12 ; Lu. vi. 31.

may be such as you yourself would wish to see adopted as a general principle, will be equally in agreement with him. Nor does it detract from the merits of Jesus that this very doctrine should have been announced in China about five centuries before he proclaimed it in Judæa. He remains not less original; but we, while giving him his due, must be careful to award an equal tribute to his great predecessor, Confucius. Twice over did that eminent man assert the principle taught in the Sermon on the Mount. In the first instance, "Chung-kung asked about perfect virtue. The Master said, 'It is, when you go abroad, to behave to every one as if you were receiving a great guest; to employ the people as if you were assisting at a great sacrifice; *not to do to others as you would not wish done to yourself*; to have no murmuring against you in the country, and none in the family.'"¹ Much more strikingly is this law enunciated in the second case. "Tsze-kung asked, saying, 'Is there one word which may serve as a rule of practice for all one's life?' The Master said, 'Is not RECIPROCITY such a word? What you do not want done to yourself, do not do to others.'"² And we have another statement of the rule in the work ascribed to the grandson of Confucius, where he is reported to have said, "What you do not like when done to yourself, do not do to others."³ It is true, as remarked by the translator, that the doctrine is here stated negatively, and not positively; but practically this can make little difference in its application. Not to do to others what we wish

¹ C. C., vol. i. p. 115.—Lun Yu, xii. 2.

² C. C., vol. i. p. 165.—Lun Yu, xv. 23.

³ Chung Yung, xiii. 3.—C. C., vol. i. p. 258.

them not to do to us would amount to nearly the same thing as doing what we wish them to do. Obviously it prohibits all actual injury which we should resent if inflicted on ourselves. But it also enjoins active benevolence ; for as we do not like the lack of kindness towards ourselves when in distress or want, so we must not be guilty of showing such lack of kindness to others. Take the parable of the good Samaritan, told in illustration of the kindred maxim to love our neighbours as ourselves. Plainly we should not like the conduct of the priest and the Levite were we in the situation of the plundered man. And if so, the behaviour of the good Samaritan is that which the Chinese as well as the Jewish prophet would require us to pursue.

Much more might be said of the doctrines of Jesus, but it is time to bring this over-long section to a close. What answer shall we now return to the query which stands at the head of this final division, What are we to think of him ? Is our judgment to be mainly favourable or mainly unfavourable ? or must it be a mixture of opposing sentiments ? The reply may be given under three separate heads, relating the one to his work as a prophet, the next to his intellectual, and the last to his moral character. Considered as a prophet, he forms one of a mighty triad who divide among them the honour of having given their religions to the larger portion of Asia and to the whole of Europe. Confucius, to whom Eastern Asia owes its most prevalent faith ; Buddha Sakyamuni, whose faith is accepted in the south and centre of that continent : and Christ, to whom Europe bows the knee, are the members of this great trinity not in unity. All three

are alike in their possession of prophetic ardour and prophetic inspiration. Two of them, the Chinaman and the Jew, speak as the conscious agents of a higher Power. The other, of whom his creed prevents us from saying this, is yet represented in his story as predestined to a great mission, becoming aware of that destiny at a certain epoch of his life, and thenceforth feeling that no temptations and no sufferings can induce him to swerve from his allotted task. Of these three men it would perhaps be accurate to say that Confucius was the most thoughtful, Sakyamuni the most eminently virtuous, and Christ the most deeply religious. Not that a description like this can be regarded as exhaustive. Each trespasses to some degree on the special domain of the others. Especially is it hard to compare the moral excellence of Jesus with that of Buddha. The Hindu, as depicted in his biographies, offers a character of singular beauty, and free from some of the defects which may be discerned in that of the Jew. History, however, was too much despised by these Oriental sectaries to enable us to form a trustworthy comparison. All we can affirm is, that, assuming the pictures of both prophets to be correctly drawn, there is in Sakyamuni a purity of tone, an absence of violence or rancour, an exemption from personal feeling and from hostile bias, which place him even on a higher level than his Jewish fellow-prophet. Supposing, on the other hand, that either picture is not historical, then it must be conceded that primitive Buddhism attained a more perfect ideal of goodness than primitive Christianity. Both ideals, however, are admirable, and they closely resemble one another.

Morally not unlike, Jesus and Sakyamuni have

another point of similarity in a certain mournfulness of spirit, a sorrowing regret for the errors of human kind, and a tender anxiety to summon them from those errors to a better way. Each in his own manner felt that life was very sad; each desired to relieve that sadness, though each aimed at effecting his end by different means. Sakyamuni offered to his disciples the peace of Nirvana; Jesus, the favour of God and the rewards to be given in his kingdom. There is a striking similarity in the manner in which the summons to suffering humanity is expressed in each religion. Here are the words ascribed to Buddha: "Many, driven by fear, seek an asylum in mountains and in woods, in hermitages and in the neighbourhood of sacred trees. But it is not the best asylum, it is not the best refuge, and it is not in that asylum that men are delivered from every pain. He, on the contrary, who seeks a refuge in Buddha, in the Law and in the Assembly, when he perceives with wisdom the four sublime truths, . . . that man knows the best asylum, the best refuge; as soon as he has reached it, he is delivered from every pain."¹ Still more beautifully is the like sentiment expressed by Jesus: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly of heart, and you shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."²

While in tenderness and sympathy for human sorrow Christ resembles Buddha, in the nature of his moral precepts he sometimes resembles Confucius.

¹ H. B. I., 186.

² Mt. xi. 28-30.

The plain duties of man towards his fellow-man are inculcated in the same spirit by both, while in Buddhism it is generally the most extreme and often prodigious examples of charity or self-sacrifice that are held up to admiration. Buddhism, moreover, teaches by means of long stories; Confucius and Jesus by means of short maxims. To a certain extent, indeed, Jesus combines both methods, the first being represented in his parables; but these are much simpler, and go far more directly to the point, than the complicated narratives of the Buddhistic canon. On the whole, we may safely say that Jesus is certainly not surpassed by either of these rival prophets, and that in some respects, if not in all, he surpasses both.

Another comparison is commonly made, and may be just touched on here. It is that between the Hebrew prophet and the Athenian sage, "who," in the words of Byron, "lived and died as none can live or die." Without fully endorsing this emphatic opinion of the poet, we may admit that Sokrates is not unworthy to stand beside Jesus in the foremost rank of the heroes of our race. He shares with the prophets who have been already named the inspiring sense of a divine mission which he is bound to fulfil. At all hazards and under all conditions he will carry on the special and peculiar work which the divine voice commands him to do. And this plenary belief in his own inspiration is not accompanied, as sometimes happens, by mental poverty. Intellectually his superiority to Jesus cannot be disputed. It is apparent in the very manner of his instruction. Sokrates could never have enunciated the truths he had to tell in that authoritative tone which is appro-

priate to the religious teacher. Whatever knowledge he thinks it possible to acquire at all must be acquired by reasoning and inquiry; and must be tested by comparison of our own mental condition with that of others. Nothing must be assumed but what is granted by the hearer. Sokrates would have thought that there was little gained by the mere dogmatic assertion of moral or spiritual truths. He must carry his interlocutor along with him; must compel him to admit his errors; must stimulate his desire of improvement by bringing him face to face with his own ignorance. Much as we must value the moral teaching of Christ, it must be confessed that the peculiar gift of Sokrates is one of a far rarer kind. The power of inculcating holiness, purity, charity, and other virtues, either directly by short maxims (as in the Confucian Analects, in Mencius, or in Marcus Aurelius), or indirectly by stories (as in Buddhagosha's parables), is by no means so uncommon as the Sokratic gift of searching examination into men's minds and souls. If Jesus is unsurpassed in the former—"primus inter pares"—Sokrates is absolutely without a rival in the latter.

Whether the shock of the *elenchus* of Sokrates, or the touching beauty of the parables and the Sermon on the Mount, produced the greatest benefit to the hearers is a question that can hardly be determined. The effect of either method must depend upon the character of those to whom it is applied. Outward appearances would lead us to assign more influence to the method of Jesus; for Sokrates left no Sokratics, while Christ did leave Christians to

hand on his doctrine. But, in the first place, it may be confidently asserted that no lasting sect could have been formed upon the basis of the few truths taught by Jesus himself; and, in the second place, the fact that he became the founder of a new religion must be attributed as much to the state of Judæa at the time as to his personal influence. That the influence of Sokrates was not small in his own lifetime might be inferred from the bitterness of the prosecution alone, even if Plato had not remained to attest the abiding impress he left upon an intellect by the side of which those of Peter, James, and John are but as little children to a full-grown athlete. We can imagine the havoc that would have been made in the statements and arguments of Jesus had Sokrates met him face to face and subjected him to his testing method. How ill would his loose popular notions have borne a close examination of their foundations; how easily would his dogmatic assertions have been exposed in all their naked presumption by a few simple questions; how quickly would his careless reasoning have been shattered by the dialectic art which would have forced him to exhibit its fallacies himself before the assembled audience! But there was no one competent to the task, and when his opponents attempted to perplex him by what they thought awkward questions, he was able to baffle them without much trouble by his superior skill.

It is not, however, as an intellectual man that we must consider Jesus. He himself laid no claim to the character, and, if we would do him justice, we must judge him by his own idea of his function and

his duties. So judging, there can be no question that we must recognise in him a man of the highest moral grandeur, lofty in his aims, pure in his use of means, earnest, energetic, zealous, and unselfish. No doubt he was sometimes misled by that very ardour which inspired him with the courage required to pursue his work. No doubt he suffered himself to forget the charity that was due to those who could not accept his mission nor bow before his preaching. No doubt he returned curse for curse, and hatred for hatred, with unsparing hand. Perhaps, too, he was sometimes the first to give way to angry passion, and to express in scathing words the bitterness he felt. Yet his failings are those of an upright and honourable character, and while they ought not to be extenuated or denied, neither ought they to outweigh his great and unquestionable merits. Appointed, as he believed, to a special work, he bravely and honestly devoted his powers to the fulfilment of that work, not even shrinking from his duty when it led him to the cross.

His unhappy end has cast its shadow over his life. He has been continually spoken of as "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." There is no reason to suppose that in any special sense he corresponded to the prophetic picture. Undoubtedly he had his sorrows; undoubtedly he was acquainted with grief. But unless there had been in his private life some tragedy of which we are not informed, those sorrows were not of the bitterest, nor was that grief of the deepest. There is no doubt in his language a tinge of that sadness which all great natures who are not in harmony with their age must needs experience. He believed that he had great truths to tell,

and he found his countrymen unwilling to receive them. Here was one source of unhappiness; and another he had in common with all who are deeply conscious of the miseries of human existence. But in no special or transcendent sense can he be termed a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. So far as our evidence goes, he was exempt from the most terrible calamities that befall mankind. Free from all earthly ties but those of friendship with his chosen companions, he was not exposed to many of the anxieties and trials which afflict more ordinary men. Dying young, he did not suffer (so far as we know) from any serious illness, nor from the troubles, both physical and mental, that scarcely ever fail to beset a longer life. Bereavement, the most terrible of human ills, never afflicted him. Whether in his youth he had suffered the pains of unrequited love at the hands of some Galilean maiden we cannot tell. But there is nothing in his language or his career that would lead us to see in him an embittered or disappointed man.

Judging by the representation given in the Gospels, it does not appear that his life was in any special measure sad or gloomy. On the contrary, his circumstances were in the main conducive to a fair share of happiness. Surrounded by admiring friends of his own sex, and attended by sympathising (perhaps loving) women, he passed from place to place, drawing crowds around him, speaking his mind freely, and receiving no inconsiderable homage. Granting that he had enemies, he was able until his prosecution to meet them on equal terms, and was not prohibited (as he would have been in most Christian countries until recent times) from proclaiming aloud his unorthodox opinions.

True, this liberty was not allowed to continue for ever, but it was no small matter for him that it had continued so long. True, he suffered a painful death ; but far less painful than many a humble martyr has undergone for his sake ; far less painful even than those torturing illnesses which so often precede the hour of rest. Nor is it possible that his death could reflect its agonies back upon his life. His life, on the whole, seems to have been one, if not of abundant happiness, yet of a fair and reasonable degree of cheerfulness and of comfort. The notion that he had not where to lay his head is of course utterly unfounded. Not only had he his own house at Nazareth, but he had friends who at all times were happy to receive him. If he himself ever drew this sad picture of his desolation (which I doubt), he must have done it for a special purpose, and without regard to the literal accuracy of his words.

While, then, I see no proof of the peculiar sorrow ascribed to him on the strength of a prophecy, I freely admit that he had the melancholy which belongs to a sympathetic heart. His words of regret over Jerusalem are unsurpassed in their beauty. At this closing period of his career we may indeed detect the sadness of disappointment. And in the bitter cry that was wrung from him at the end, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" we look down for a moment into an abyss of misery which it is painful to contemplate ; physical suffering and a shaken faith, the agonies of unaccomplished purposes, and the still more fearful agony of desertion by the loving Father in whom he had put his trust.

But Jesus, though he knew it not, had done his work. Nay, he had done more than he himself intended. After-ages saw in him—what he saw only in his God—an ideal to be worshipped and a power to be addressed in prayer. We, who are free from this exaggeration of reverence, may yet continue to pay him the high and unquestioned honour which his unflinching devotion to his duty, his gentle regard for the weak and the suffering, his uncorrupted purity of mind, and his self-sacrificing love so abundantly deserve.

END OF VOL. I.

